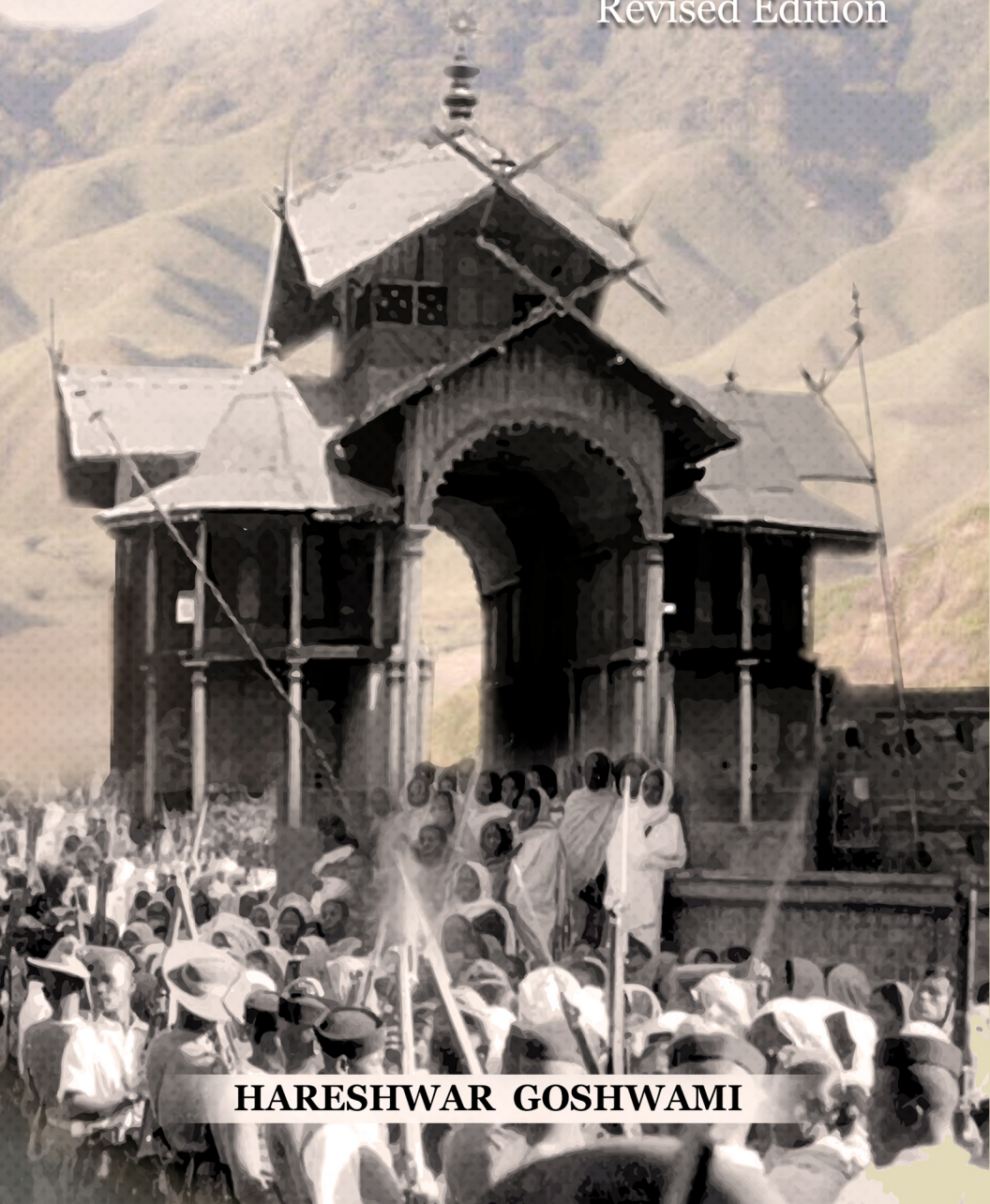


HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF MANIPUR

Revised Edition



HARESHWAR GOSHWAMI

G.H. Harvey's Narrative of
Fall of Sagaing
(Myanmar).

“In 1738 when the king [Mahadammayaza] garrisoned these two places (Myedu and Tabayin) and Mingin in the Upper Chindwin district against them [Manipuris], they [Manipuris] simply cantered past, camped at Thalunbyu west of Saigaing, burnt every house and monastery up to the wall of Ava [capital of Burma], and stormed the stockade built to protect the Kaunghmudaw pagoda slaughtering the garrison like cattle in a pen and killing the commandant, a minister of the Hluttaw Council; the old doors leaves of the pagoda's eastern gateway show a gash made by the sword of garibbaniwaz [Garibniwaj] when he was forcing an entrance.”

Harvey: History of Burma.
(1926).

History of the
PEOPLE OF MANIPUR
(Revised Edition)

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Hareshwar Goshwami



YAOL

Co-publisher
Suraj Kumar Okram

History of the
PEOPLE OF MANIPUR
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Dedicated to



Eigi ene
late G. Sushila (Mema)
(1951-1976)



Eigi echanupa
late G. Khelchandra (Iton)
(1983-2004)

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I am indebted to a senior intellectual and personal friend, Dr Malem Ningthouja based in Delhi. He helped me in amplifying the book with his perpetual academic knowledge. I am grateful to him and Leishangthem Sushila for their hospitality and support.

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I express my gratitude to my wife Wahengbam Amita, daughter G.C. Sapna, sons G. Mohonchandra and G. Dinachandra, and cousins Prameswor Goswami and Tillakanta Goswami for their precious support in finding and furnishing materials for the revised book during my engagement for publication of the book at Delhi. I am thankful to all those who had directly or indirectly helped me.

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INTRODUCTION

Manipur, a fertile and luxuriant geographical space of hills and valleys has been a host to migrants from many directions since the pre and proto-historical times. This geographical space is, today, the native home of people of Manipur who are categorised under; (1) official categories, such as, General, Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Tribes, and Scheduled Castes, and (2) broader social nomenclatures, such as, Kuki-Chin, Meetei/ Meitei (Bamons and Pangals inclusive), and Naga. If one breaks down the two categories mentioned above, the geographical space is the homeland of the following lineages, namely; Aimol, Anal, Angami, Angom (Nongpal/Nongbal, Selloi, Langmai, Lera-Khongngang, Kongpa etc.), Bamon (Meitei Bamon), Chakpa (Tangba, Kasi, Sawang, Nongphu, Menong etc.), Chenglei/Sarang Leishangthem (Thangyi, Urok-Ushai, Haorok-Konthou, Thanga-Kambong, Lokhu-Lokton etc.), Chiru, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kharam, Khaba-Nganba (Khumuk, Nongcheng, Longkhum, Manding etc.), Khuman (Nongyai, Khayoi/Kharoi, Mayang-Thongngang, Nongyai etc.), Koirao (Thangal), Koireng (Koren), Kom, Lamkang, Luwang (Nungpan, Heirem-Khunjan, Khunpham, Ngangcheng, Haokap-Chingshang, Haoku, Phantek etc.), Lushai, Mao-Maram, Maring, Mate, Mizo, Moirang (Iwang, Khwang, Kege, Khuyon, Kouba, Mayang, Ngangoi etc.), Moyon, Monshang, Paite, Pangal (Meitei Pangal), Paomai, Purum (Chothe) Ningthouja/Mangang (Poirei, Wangam), Purum, Ralte, Simte, Suhte, Tangkhul, Tarao, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zeliangrong (Rongmei, Liangmei, Inpui/Puime, Zeme), Zou, and etc.

The above-mentioned lineages descended from common pedigrees belonging to Austro-Mongoloid, Tibeto-Burman, and Chinese-Siamese origins. They evolved into *unique identities* in the course of complex processes of inter-mixing or splits that occurred during migrations, distributions, and social intercourses. They had shared experience of ecology, economy, polity, culture, inter-marriage, legends, traditions, history, fortunes, and misfortunes. The uniqueness of this shared co-existence has been

the ability to preserve and promote cultivated lineage customs, cultures, and traditions. They are intricately linked into an organic feature to the extent that a *unique history* pertaining to a single community cannot be construed without bringing into account those of the interconnected communities. Even important historical event, such as the ascendancy of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba in 33 CE cannot overemphasize the personal glory of an individual; it should be understood by bringing into focus the interplay of various forces and communities in its historical time, space and contexts.

Manipur does not belong to a single lineage or a particular nomenclature of people. Manipur is a geographical space, in which waves of migrants had established permanent 'homes' and organized themselves into viable economic, social, and political institutions. This geographical space had served a common ecological premise for various forms of polities; tribal republics, semi-feudal chieftainship, federations and confederations, monarchy, empire, colonialism, constitutional monarchy, and so on. It meant that different communities under various stages of development and corresponding forms of polity were, at varying degrees, brought under the framework of governance by an expanding institution of monarchy. Communities were constituted into segments of an organic feature. They were not merely administered from above; they also had contributed to the making of shared responsibility. It was the sum total of communities at play that had paved the way to the evolution of a *centralised monarchy thriving on the feudal mode of production*. That institution reached a particular stage of empire building at some point in time.

The landscape of the empire had probably covered an extensive geographical area spanning over several centuries. It involved a linear course marked by feuds and campaigns of consolidation and expansion. However, geo-strategic threats by parallel kingdoms became a concern with the rise of the north and north-westerly kingdoms of Ahoms and Tripuris respectively in the 13th century CE. Security concern became more alarming as a result of potential threats from the east following the rise of

Toungoo (1510-1752 CE) and Konbaung (1752-1885 CE) dynasties of Burma. To maintain a balance of power with the parallel kingdoms, Manipur pursued crucial defensive and offensive engagements; it was a terror to invaders including Burma.

Manipur remained untouched till the second half of the 18th century. This period, however, witnessed a relative fall in the supremacy of Manipur; that was marked by internal strife on one hand and the unprecedented external threats from more powerful expansionist powers on the other. Manipur was dragged into the middle of a confrontation of two great powers; the Burmese and the British, which ultimately culminated in the British occupation of Manipur in 1891. During the Second World War, Manipur was a crucial defensive frontier of the Allied powers against the combined forces of Japan and Indian National Army. After the collapse of the British Empire in 1947, its successor the Dominion of India, having realised the geo-strategic importance of Manipur, took Manipur under its rule.

Finally, the book is an attempt to collate and analyse fragments of oral and literary accounts in an attempt to bring into a single volume. This is a sum-up view about the origin, distribution, split and blending, and the emergence of the communities which are believed to have constituted the natives or indigenes of Manipur. It has not been an easy attempt as the author had realized missing links on several topics due to want of more detailed and authentic primary and secondary sources. This volume, however, is expected to open up certain pertinent themes or issues or topics that in future others may carry out more comprehensive research.

Hareshwar Goshwami

Space, Territory, and Limits

Nestling deep in the lush green mountains of Southeast Asia, there is a land called Manipur, where the *Shirui Lily*¹ blooms and the *Sangai*² grooms. Since time immemorial, bards and poets eulogised it as a *Golden Land* nurtured by surrounding hills and mountains and protected by gods. During the Second World War, the Japanese soldiers, who fought the Allied Forces in Manipur, described it *Takane No Hana*³, that is, “*a flower on lofty heights*”. Lord Irwin⁴ praised it as *Switzerland of India*. There are others who termed it the land of the *Blue Mountains and Green Valleys*, *A Little Paradise on Earth*, and so on.

I. VARIOUS APPELLATIONS

Manipur was attributed to by various appellations in the past. The point is, there cannot be denying that the foundation of present Manipur State is traced in the kingdom with its seat of power firmly rooted in what is today known as Imphal Valley. The domain evolved over a span of more than two thousand years, withstanding a series of trials and challenges, and came to be known as Manipur, sometime in the 18th century. According to archaic Manipuri texts, the kingdom in its ancient past was known by several appellations, such as (a) *Tillikokton Ahanba*⁵, (b) *Hanna*

¹ *Timrawon* in local Tangkhul dialect; scientific name is *Lilium mackliniae*; grown only on Siroy-Kashong peak in Ukhrul District; British plant enthusiast Kingdon-Ward discovered it in 1946. It received the Prestigious Merit Prize in 1948 by Royal Horticultural Society Flower, London.

² Scientific name is *Rucervus eldii eldii*; Lt. Percy Eld, the then Commissioner of Assam, introduced it to the outside world in 1841.

³ Japanese literal meaning is *flower on lofty heights*; proverbially *something very tempting but beyond one's reach*.

⁴ Viceroy of India; 1926-31 CE.

⁵ Some believe that *Tillikokton Ahanba* is derived from the words *Til* (beings or creatures that existed before the creation of human beings), *Li* (Lai), *kok* (head) and *tong* (hill or elevated place); the loose meaning of the name is a hill or a high place where the *Til* and *Lai* inhabited first.

Semba Konna Loiba, (c) *Muwapalli*, (d) *Mongpiru*, (e) *Thanghutwa*, (f) *Sumpipokshung*, (g) *Kangleipung Mayai Sumtongpan*, (h) *Kanglei-Pungmayol*, (i) *Kangleipak*,⁶ (j) *Muwapalli Mayai Sungtongpan*, (k) *Meitrabak*, (l) *Poirei Meitei Leipak*, (m) *Meera Pongthoklam*⁷, and so on. Late Padmashree Khelchandra cited *Soubon Yairenbi* and added some more appellations, such as; (a) *Chakpa Langba*, (b) *Muwapalli*, and (c) *Wangam Tanthong Mayung Kuiba Lemthong Maphei Pakpa*. According to him, there were also appellations attributed to in different points of time before the kingdom was known as *Poirei Meitei*.⁸ In the 18th century, the country was also known as *Mekhala*. In the meanwhile, this kingdom was known to different neighbouring principalities or kingdoms by different appellations. Burmese called it *Kathe*; Cacharis *Moglie* or *Magli*; the Lai tribes of Chin Hills *Phai-gam*; the Ahoms *Mekle* or *Mekheli* or *Mekhali*; the early Assamese *Moglao*; Shans inhabiting east of Chindwin (Ningthee) River *Cassay* or *Kase*; while some ancient some Hindu writers referred to it as *Swarna Bhousak*.

Some writers have established that the people living in and around Manipur were referred to in ancient texts and travelogues. According to Dr S.K. Chatterji, the ancient Hindu scripture *Yajurveda*, for the first time, mentioned the people inhabiting present North-eastern India as *Kiratas*,⁹ that is, cave dwellers. He

⁶ (1) Kangjiya Mangang believes the appellation *Kangleipak* was commonly used till the last quarter of 18th century. Ng. Kangjiya Mangang. (1997). *Chingmi Tammi Hourak Wari*. Imphal. p. 41. (2) *Cheitharol Kumbaba* used the appellation *Kangleipak* during the reigns of Meidingu Chingthangkomba (1759-1761 and 1763-1798): L. Ibungohal and N. Khelchandra. Ed. (1967). *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. Imphal: Manipur Sahitya Parishad. p.123.

⁷ Interpreted as combination of the words *Mee* + *Pong* (people of Shan origin), *Thok* (to emerge), *Lam* (land); loosely *land where Mee and Pong emerged*.

⁸ Padmashree N. Khelchandra. (1992). *Ariba Manipuri Sahityagi Itihas*. Imphal. p. 2.

⁹ *Sanskrit* term for non-Aryan tribes (Mongoloid origin) inhabiting Himalayan mountainous regions or Northeast India; connected with Cinás or Chinese, Bhotas or Tibetans, and other Mongoloid people. Suniti Kumar

believes that in *Atharva Veda* there was a reference about a young *Kirata* damsel who dug for herbal remedy with shovels wrought of gold on the high ridges of hills.¹⁰ Megasthenes¹¹ mentioned a place situated towards the east of *Derdai* (said to be inhabitants of Assam) amongst mountains, a high table-land of about 3,000 *stadia*¹² in circumference where gold mines were found. Acharyya¹³ believes that Manipur was mentioned in the book *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*. According to this argument, Manipur, in the 1st Century CE exported gold, silk and *malabathrum* (*Cinnamomum tamala*) to Greece. The book also mentions a place called *Chryse* where gold was abundantly found. Acharyya believes that *Chryse* was *Katche* or *Cassay*, which is one of the ancient names of Manipur. Reading the interpretation of G.E. Gerini,¹⁴ in corroboration with other secondary works, one can establish that a place called *Mareura* mentioned in Klandios Ptolemy's book *Geographical Account of India* was located in Manipur. The argument is, that Kabo Valley (now in Myanmar), in ancient time, also known as *Mauriya* or *Mauria*,¹⁵ was located

Chatterji. (1950). *Kirata Janana Kirti*. In *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Letters, Vol. XVI, No. 2. p. 161

¹⁰ The people had knowledge of agricultural implements, medicinal plants and gold; indicated socio-economically well-established Kingdom: Chatterji. 'Kirata Janana Kirti.' p. 162.

¹¹ Greek traveller and writer: 302-298 BCE.

¹² A unit of measurement mentioned in *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*.

¹³ N.N. Acharyya. (1988). Manipur in the Eye of Foreign Historians. In Sanajaoba Naorem. Ed. *Manipur: past and Present*. Delhi: Mittal.

¹⁴ In his book *Researches on Ptolemy Geography*

¹⁵ (1) "The route by which the Kshatriya princes arrived is indicated in the traditions as being through Manipur, which lies within the basin of the Irrawaddy. The northern part of the Kubo Valley, which is the direct route from Manipur towards Burma, is still called Mauriya or Mauria, said to be the name of the tribe which King Asoka belonged": Sir Arthur P. Phayre. (1883). *History of Burma Including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim, and Arakan*. London: Trubner & Co. p.4. (2) King Asoka of the Mauryan Empire, could be a non-Aryan ruler of Magadha. Ashoka, being the grandson of Chandragupta could probably be belonged to Mongoloid racial group. Ashoka may be assumed to be a non-Aryan ruler of Magadha. Hence the possibility of his racial affinity with the mongoloid peoples of Yun-nan

within the kingdom of Moirang, before the later was wholly absorbed into the realm of Manipur. It is also presumed that the place called *Udayagiri*, mentioned in *Kitab-ul-Hind*¹⁶ is Manipur. Acharyya cited S.K. Bhuyan and identified the country of *Magali* with Manipur. Manipur is also considered to be the place where the fugitive Mughal prince Shuja (son of emperor Shah Jahan and Governor of Bengal), having been defeated by Mir Jumla (a Mughal General), sought refuge after fleeing from his capital Dacca.¹⁷ There can be many more references that have not been explored so far. Further research can be done on the sources of these propositions.

II. DEBATING APPELLATION

The appellation *Manipur*, which is now widely known for the present State of Manipur, is debated for its originality and mythical references. First, in its literal form, *Manipur* is defined as *Land of Jewels*, i.e., a combination of the words *Mani* (Jewel) and *Pur* (land). The question is, when did the term become a dominant or hegemonic title for the kingdom of Manipur? Yumjao Singh traces the genesis of the term in the pre-Garibniwaz period. He refers to the archaic text *Sating Sakok Puya* and argues that between two places called *Nungoibi* and *Taibongthong* (situated inside Kangla, the ancient palace of Manipur), there was a stone with a supernatural power known as *Mani* (precious stone), on account of which the kingdom with its seat of power rested at Kangla came to be known as *Manipur*.¹⁸ Yumjao's theory has been widely refuted. To be precise, the name *Manipur* was

or Burma is not to be brushed aside on sentimental grounds: Padmeswar Gogoi. (1999 Edn.). *The Tai and the Tai kingdoms: with a fuller treatment of the Tai-Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley*. Gauhati: Gauhati University. p. 40.

¹⁶ Written by Arabian historian Alberuni (Abu Rihan) who accompanied Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni in his Indian expeditions

¹⁷ Acharyya. 'Manipur in the Eye of Foreign Historians.' pp. 41-44.

¹⁸ W. Yumjao Singh. (1935). *Report on the Archaeological Studies in Manipur*. Bulletin No. 1, Imphal. p.75.

adopted in the period after the conversion of Meiteis into Hinduism during the reign of Meidingu (Maharaja) Pamheiba (Garibniwaz: 1709-48 CE)¹⁹ or most possibly during the time of Meidingu (Maharaja) Chinglen Nongdrenkhomba (Gambhir Singh). According to the text *Pamheiba Larei Lathup*, Manipur was adopted by Meidingu (Maharaja) Pamheiba (Garibniwaz) at the inducement of his spiritual mentor Santi Das, the *Gosai*.²⁰ However, *Manipur* was concurrently used along with other appellations such as *Mekhala*, *Meitei Leipak*, and so on. This view can be substantiated by studying numismatics, treaties and correspondence letters. Coins issued by Pamheiba (Garibniwaz) and his successors inscribed the word *Mekhle*.²¹ Both *Mekhala* and *Manipur* were concurrently used during the reign of Meidingu (Maharaja) Jai Singh (1759-1761 and 1763-98 CE). *Meckley* was used when a treaty was signed between Manipur and East India Company, during the time of Meidingu Maramba (Gourashyam), on 14th Sept. 1762. At the same time, the title *Manipureshwar* (Lord of Manipur) was inscribed on the coins circulated by Meidingu (Maharaja) Jai Singh and his successors. The British, however, freely used *Manipur* (though in varied English spellings in different times), which became prominent after the “Treaty of

¹⁹ Bhogeswor. (1972). *Sanamahi Laikal*. Imphal. p. 50.

²⁰ (1) The genesis of the title *Gosai* is obscure. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* mentioned it for the first time during the reign of Meidingu Charairongba (1697-1709 CE), i.e., before the arrival of Santi Das *Lamboiba*: Ibungohal and Khelchandra. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. p. 68. (2) Since *Bamon Khunthoklon* does not mention *Gosai* in the list of immigrants, it can be assumed that it was a title awarded from time to time to certain Meitei Bamons. Santi Das Lamboiba, a Brahmin from Sylhet, came to Manipur during the reign of Meidingu Pamheiba (Garibniwaz: 1709-1748), married Meidingu Pamheiba Chanu Wangamlon, and he was issueless: Munan Meitei. *Bamon Khunthoklon*. Imphal. p. 9. (3) Meitei Ningthourol also stated, that in 1716 CE, Shanti Das, the *Gosai*, a preacher of Ramandi religion, an inhabitant of Narsingh Tilla of Srihatta District of the present Bangladesh, arrived at Manipur: Sarangthem Bormani. (2000). *Ningthourol*. Imphal. p. 106. (4) He must have been awarded the title *Gosai*.

²¹ P. Gunindro Singh. (1983). *Manipuri Numismatics*. Imphal: Mutua Museum. p.6.

Yandaboo” in 1826.²² But, the correspondence letters of Meidingu (Maharaja) Chandrakirti, written in Meitei Script other than those in the Bengali language written in Bengali Script, and addressed to British Officials, used *Meitei* or *Meitei Leipak*. However, in the long run, *Manipur* became more predominant as it was officially promoted by the British.

Second, there exists a presumption that identifies the present State of Manipur with the *Manipura* mentioned in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. The presumption has been utterly refuted by writers such as N.L. Dey, Edward Gait, J. Roy, Nagendranath Bose among others. According to their understanding, *Manipura* of *Mahabharata* was located near a sea and was probably a seaport, closer to the mouth of Lake Chilika, in present-day Odisha. *Manipura* of *Mahabharata* is also being identified with a place called Manikapattan in Odisha. According to N.L. Dey, the location of the capital of Kalinga, as described in *Mahabharata* and *Raghuvansa*, apart from sharing a similarity of the name, matches with those of Manikapattan.²³ Edward Gait also stated that *Manipura* mentioned in *Mahabharata* was the capital of Babhravahana, the king of Kalinga. It must, therefore, have been situated somewhere in the south of Odisha or north of Madras.²⁴ J. Roy referred to Wilson and stated that *Manipura* of *Mahabharata* was located at the and it could not be identified with modern Manipur, which is far away from any sea coast. Nagendranath Bose in his *Viswakosh* also found *Manipura* of *Mahabharata* in Kalinga of present-day Odisha.²⁵ The attempts to establish a mythological connection between present State of Manipur and Hindu cosmology and epics lack academic merits. However, some people either believe in such mythology or who politically act on fabricating history with myths and polemics.

²² Signed on 24 February 1826.

²³ Nando Lal Dey, (1984). *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India*. Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. p.126.

²⁴ Sir Edward Gait. (1997 Reprint). *A History of Assam*. Guwahati: Lawyer’s Book Stall. p. 257.

²⁵ Jyotirmoy Roy. (1973 Edn.). *History of Manipur*. Calcutta: East Light Book House. p. 4.

III. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The present State of Manipur is situated on the western expanse of Southeast Asia. It is located between 23°50'N to 25°42'N and 92°58'E to 94°45'E. Its total geographical area is 22,327 square kilometres. Approximately, 90% of the geographic area is covered with mountainous or hilly terrains. The remaining 10% geographic area is a valley or plain areas, which include; (a) the centrally located Imphal valley, (b) Jiribam plain, and (c) sporadic patches of valleys located across administrative divisions. The elevation varies between 750 m and 3000 m above Mean Sea Level (MSL). The average elevation of Imphal, the capital of Manipur, is 790 m above MSL. Manipur shares a boundary with India's North-eastern states of Nagaland on the north, Mizoram on the south, and Assam on the west. It shares an international border with Chin State and Sagaing Division of Myanmar (Burma) on the south and east respectively.

1. Geomorphologic Feature

Manipur is a land of hills, rivers, and dales. The geomorphologic feature is similar to that of other South-east Asian regions and the configuration, according to geologists, is not older than thirty million years.²⁶ It emerged out of the ocean as a result of geostatic movement connected with the upliftment of Himalayas from the floor of the *Sea of Tethys*.²⁷ Fossil remains of marine creatures such as *cuttlefish* (now extinct) at Kangpokpi,²⁸ and other sea creatures at Koubru hills (Senapati and Kangpokpi Districts) and Somdal hills (Ukhrul District), substantiates the view that Manipur was once under water. According to anthropologist Angou, the elevation of Manipur from sea occurred about 50 million years before present (BP). During the *Cretaceous* period

²⁶ Comparatively recent one considering the age of the earth is about four thousand six hundred million years old.

²⁷ Tethys Sea or Neotethys was an ocean located between the ancient continents of Gondwana and Laurasia.

²⁸ In the northern part of Manipur hills.

or the last part of Mesozoic Era (60-110 million years BP/145.5 to 65.5 million years ago), the region underwent *orogenic* movement caused by geodynamic forces. The long-accumulated sediments on the floor of *Tethys* were deformed as ridges and basins. This caused the appearance of land on the one hand and deepening of the part of the *Tethys* on the other.

The *Cretaceous* period formations were overlain by lower tertiary formations belonging to the *Eocene* period (40-60 million years BP). This period provided two clear-cut facies; one *shelf* and the other *geosynclinals*. The rocks formed under *geosynclinals* facies are *Disang shales*, which are *argillaceous* sedimentary rocks. The *Disang shales*, which have a widespread occurrence over the eastern half of Manipur, are overlain by *Barail Series* belonging to *Oligocene* epoch (25-40 million years BP). These sedimentary rocks of *Barail Series* constitute considerable tracts of Tamenglong, None, Churachandpur, Pherzawl, Senapati and Kangpokpi districts. The zone of contact between *Disangs* and *Barails* is found at Chandel and Tengnoupal districts.

Regarding the types of rocks, those found in Ukhrul District are said to belong to a *Cretaceous* period group, which include mainly variegated shale, slate, siltstone (with some amount of sandstone) and quartzite. The shale-sandstone type of rocks found in Tamenglong district is said to belong to the *Barail Series*.

Regarding the formation of the Central Valley, it was due to the upliftment of the hills after *Pleistocene* epoch (2.58 million years to 0.012 million years ago), which resulted in the subsidence of the central part. It is also stated, that the formation of the southern mountains led to the reversal of drainage system resulting into impounding of water in most of the valley for a long time and subsequent formation of lakes and swamps of the Imphal valley. Angou suggested that the whole of Imphal valley had never been a vast lake after its emergence from the sea as put forward by others. There were lakes and swamps in many places, and some of them still exist.

2. Climate and Edaphic Condition

Manipur, by Koppen's classification of world's climatic division, falls in the climatic zone of *cwa*²⁹, i.e., humid subtropical climate. The whole year can be classified into four seasons: (i) Winter (December to February), (ii) Pre-monsoon (March to April), (iii) Monsoon (May to September), and (iv) Retreating monsoon (October to November). Locally, a year is classified into six seasons, namely; (i) *Yening-tha* or spring (March-April), (ii) *Kalen-tha* or summer (May-June), (iii) *Nongju-tha* or rainy season (July-August), (iv) *Olang-tha* or autumn (September-October), (v) *Naken-tha* or Fall or pre-winter (November-December), and (VI) *Ningtham-tha* or winter (January-February).³⁰

Sometimes there is a considerable amount of pre-monsoon rain. Otherwise, rain comes in April and continues up to September—occasionally up to October. Rainfall ranges between 1100 mm and 3500 mm. But, the period from June to September accounts for a little over half of the annual rainfall. It usually is abundant and almost equally distributed, though there is some variation between hill and valley areas. Hill areas normally receive higher rainfall than valley areas. The overall climatic condition is pleasant. In the winter, the temperature in the valley seldom touches freezing point whereas in the summer it is never too hot. In most of hill areas, winter is comparatively cooler though summer remains pleasant throughout.

The soil in Manipur can be divided into two types: valley soil and mountain soil. First, the valley soil is transported; it, therefore, contains a high proportion of clay and is generally composed of clays, sands, silts, *etc.* of *fluviolacustrine* (sediments produced by both rivers and lakes) origin and *ferruginous* red soil in the foothill region. Virgin soil types like clayey loam, dark clayey loam and boggy kind of soil are also found in patches in low-lying

²⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/science/Koppen-climate-classification>

³⁰ Since the onset, duration and amount of precipitation of the monsoon rain are erratic, this particular classification of seasons may not hold good for a particular year and thus serves for general reference": <https://mastec.nic.in/modern-climate.html>

areas. Due to gradual and regular silting of soil from the surrounding hills, the soil cover is very thick (350 to 500 ft.) and rich in organic contents. Second, the mountain soil is thin in the layer, loose and porous. Red soil is predominant in the hills, but at some place, laterite soil is also found. The soil has very low moisture receptivity, about 1-3% organic carbon, and is suitable for vegetation. In the hill areas, the virginity of soil and its productivity have direct positive co-relation.

3. River System

Manipur is located in the catchment areas of two great river systems of Southeast Asia - (a) Brahmaputra- Ganga River system, and (b) Chindwin³¹-Irrawaddy River system. First, the western half of Manipur falls in the catchment area of the Ganga-Brahmaputra River system. Second, the eastern half, including the centrally located Imphal valley, lies in the catchment area of Chindwin-Irrawaddy River system. These two broader divisions are grouped into two local river systems, that is, (a) Manipur River system, and (b) Barak River systems. Important rivers of Manipur are Manipur (Imphal), Iril (Leel-wai-yi), Barak (Avouri), Irang, Maku, Jiri, Maklang, Kongba, Nambul and Thoubal Rivers. Almost all the rivers and streams of the valley and hills fall into these two river systems. Manipur River drains the eastern half of Manipur, including Imphal valley, into Chindwin-Irrawaddy River system (Burma). Barak River drains the western half of Manipur into the Brahmaputra-Ganga (India-Bangladesh) river system. A brief account of the two river systems in Manipur are discussed as follows.

Manipur River: Manipur river is known by various localised names, such as *Imphal* or *Turel Achouba*³² amongst Meiteis, *Tiki*

³¹ Chindwin river of Burma is known as *Ningthi* by Manipuris, *Humpurong* by Shans, and *Kyendween* by Burmese.

³² A.K. Sharma identifies it with *Minno River* mentioned by Ptolemy: A.K. Sharma (1996). *Early Man in Eastern Himalayas (North-East India and Nepal)*. Delhi: Aryan Book International. p. 39.

at its source amongst the people there, *Gun* by Kuki-Chin people, and *Kathe Khong/Khwang* in Myanmar. It is the longest river, and almost all the rivers of Imphal valley fall into it. It originates from the hills of Thongiang in Kangpokpi District and stretches about two hundred eighty-one kilometres across Manipur till the international border. In Myanmar, it is joined by *Myittha* River before it finally enters Ningthi (Chindwin) River at Kalewa region in Myanmar. Its total length stretching from its origin to the point of its entrance at Chindwin is about seven hundred kilometres.

Barak River: Barak river originates from a place called *Yupyohou* situated between Liyai Khunou and Liyai Khullen at Senapati District. It is known by various local names at Senapati district, such as (a) *Tsiipyo* in *Yupyohou* hills, (b) *Avouri* after it touches a narrow valley near *Yupyohou* hills, (c) *Sangulok*, *Gwai Ahu*, *Agu*, *Alang*, etc. After traversing the northern hills of Manipur, it crosses National Highway (presently NH-39) at Karong in Senapati District and flows towards the north-western direction from Lairou hills and enters Tamenglong District. It passes through Tamenglong District and part of Pherzawl District, down to Tipaimukh, where it meets Tuivai River. There it turns northward till it joins Jiri River at Jirimukh, and thence enters Cachar District of Assam. After traversing through the plains of Cachar, it enters Bangladesh where it is known as Surma River. In Manipur, Barak empties Maku, Irang, Tuivai, Jiri and other streams before it ultimately joins Brahmaputra River.

4. Hill Ranges

Manipur hill ranges are a part of Assam-Burma tertiary ranges, which is a part of the Himalayan mountain system. These ranges extend up-to Arakan Yoma and Andaman Nicobar *via* Chin Hills. The hills, extended in ‘parallel folds’ from north to south. It may be divided into western and eastern hill ranges. First, the western hill ranges consist of Koubru-Laimaton, Maku Longdi, Kala Naga, and Vangai ranges—which form the southern branches of Barail series. Notable peaks of the western hill ranges are

Tamphaba (2669 m), Khengbung (2647 m), Koubru (2561 m), Kounu (2304 m), Loijing (2015 m), Thangjing (2109 m), and Laimatol Phuorungba (1790 m). Second, the eastern hill ranges consist of Chingai, Siroy (Shirui), Mapithel, Hundung, and Yamoduong ranges—which form branches of Patkai Mountain on Indo-Burma border. Some significant peaks of eastern hill ranges are, Shirui (2835 m), Hundung (2473 m), Mapithel (2055 m), and Nanglem Vum (2387 m).³³ Koubru³⁴ range facing the valley towards southerly direction runs north to south and almost divide Manipur into two halves. Mount Essau or Iso, which is also known as Tennipu to southern Angamis, is the highest peak of Manipur, having an altitude of 2995m³⁵ above Mean Sea Level.

5. Valleys or Tampaks

There are several valleys in Manipur. Some of the important valleys are Imphal Tampak, Khoupum Tampak, Dzuko Tampak, Sazik Tampak, Zeilad Tampak, etc.

The Imphal Tampak: Imphal valley, stretching across an area of about 2,238 square kilometres, is the largest and the most important valley in Manipur. It is centrally located and encircled by mountain ranges on all sides. It has an average altitude of 785 m above MSL. It is formed by fluvial deposits from the tertiary hills and mountains surrounding it. In the past, most parts of the valley were a wetland with water covering at least up to 820

³³ (1998) *Journal of Geographical Society of Manipur*. Vol. II, No.1 & 2. Imphal: Geographical Society of Manipur. pp.8-9.

³⁴ Many Meiteis trace their origin to the region in and around Koubru hills. It is reflected in their folk song, “*Awang Koubru Asuppa – Laiyam Khunda Ahanba – Sanalik Mapal Thadringeri – Sanalik Mapal Thariba – Nongthrei Mawoo Lingdringeri – Nongthrie Mawoo Lingliba*” [Loose translation: Koubru peak to the north is the highest place where Gods made their foremost habitation, and created different orders of beings. Gods are the roots from which living beings bloom like flowers]. Dr. L. Bheigyachandra. (1991). *The Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis Before the Advent of Vaisnavism in Manipur*. L. Momon Devi: Imphal. pp. 28-29.

³⁵ In some sources the height of Mount Iso is given as 2993m and 2994m

metres contour level.³⁶ The valley can be topographically divided into northern and southern halves. The northern half is higher and gradually slopes towards the south. The slope or gradient between Sekmai (824 m) in the north and Bishnupur (777 m) in the south, which is 38 kilometres by the crow's flight, is 1.23 metre per kilometre in average. The southern half is dotted with numerous lakes and swamps, such as Loktak, Kharung, Khoidum, Ikop, Loushi, Lamjao, Pumlun, *etc.*

Dzuko Tampak: It is one of the most beautiful creations of nature. It lies, in the north-eastern corner of Manipur, near Mao in Senapati district, bordering Nagaland state. The appellation *Dzuko Tampak* is derived from a river known as *Dzuko* that flows through the valley. The literal meaning of *Dzuko* (cold water), as coined by Mao people, is derived from a combination of *Dzu* (water) and *Ko* (cold). During the winter season, the river is covered with ice sometimes as thick as 5/6 inches. Standing at an average height of 2500 metres above MSL and spreading across an approximate area of 2.5 square kilometres, it is surrounded by hills and mountains on all sides. The valley is uninhabited but famous for attractive natural landscape and rare species of *Dzuko lily* (*Lilium chitrangadae*) that generally blooms in the intervening months of May-June.

Sajik Tampak: It is situated on the south-western portion of Manipur in Chandel District. The average elevation of the valley is 900 metres above Mean Sea Level. The valley is noted for Songbu cave, where remnants of Palaeolithic culture have been discovered.³⁷ Spreading across an area approximately ranging between 1 and 2 kilometres (at different places) in breadth and 6 kilometres in length and having a climate almost identical with that of Imphal valley, the valley is noted for fertility and agricultural abundance.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 8

³⁷ M. Jitendra, Singh. (1991). Pre-history of Manipur. In Jai Prakash Singh and Gautam Sen Gupta. Ed. *Archaeology of North-Eastern India*. Delhi: Har Anand Publications. p. 127.

Western Plain: Jiribam, situated on the westernmost portion of Manipur bordering Cachar District of Assam, covers the whole of the western plain. The plain is formed by alluvium deposits inundated by Barak River and its tributary Jiri River. Its average altitude is approximately 100 metres above Mean Sea level. Warm and humid climate renders the valley suitable for the growth of varieties of vegetation, some of which are different from the rest of Manipur.

6. Flora and Fauna

Ecologically, Northeast India forms a part of the South Asian tropical rain-forest belt, which for its abundant varieties of wild plants and animals useful to men is regarded as an area of attraction for Stone Age food-gatherers. The forest of Manipur can be broadly divided into four types, namely: (i) Tropical semi-evergreen forest in the western part bordering Cachar; (ii) Tropical deciduous forest along Manipur-Burma border; (iii) Subtropical pine forest; and (iv) Dry temperate forest in the hills. Difference in geomorphologic structure between eastern and western ranges, that is, *Disang* and *Barail* series, respectively play important roles in the distribution of vegetation. First, the eastern ranges come under tropical moist deciduous, sub-tropical pine and tropical dry deciduous forest types. Second, the western ranges are mostly under tropical wet evergreen type. At high altitudes, alpine type of vegetation is found.

Climatic and edaphic conditions of Manipur favour luxurious growth of different varieties of plants and shrubs giving proper shelter to wild animals and birds. These forests and numerous swamps and valleys are homes to wide ranges of flora and fauna. First, the forests have varieties of plants that are found in the geographical belt from the Himalayas to Malaya on the one hand and Chinese on the other. It is abundant in varieties of orchids, of which some four hundred and seventy-two have been identified so far. Shirui hill is the only place in the world where Shirui lily grows. Second, the swamps and valleys are equally significant.

Keibul Lamjao, on the southeastern fringe of Loktak Lake in the Imphal Valley, is the only home of the marsh-dwelling brown-antlered deer (*Rucervus eldii eldii*), which is listed as an endangered species in the Red List of International Union for Conservation for Nature (IUCN). Varieties of migratory birds from places as far as Siberia annually visit the lakes in the valley.

IV. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

1. Trade Route

There is a proposition that suggests for an ancient Manipur having played transit roles on the trade route connecting Southeast Asia and Central Asia. The proposition which leaves room for further research articulates for an extensive geographical area of Manipur kingdom during its ancient golden past, and that, certain regions which were later on ceded away or lost had played certain roles in international trades. The assumption is that there was an inland South-west Silk Route. The route must have spread across the mountain ranges between eastern India and Yunan province of China, passing through the regions that today constitute Upper Burma. It is believed that two trade routes were passing through the hills of Manipur. P.C. Bagchi believes that Manipur-Burma trade route, in 2nd century BCE, was mentioned in the accounts of Chinese envoy *Chang-Kien* (Chang Ch'ien).³⁸ Pelliot's interpretation of *Chang-Kien*'s account, taken together with inputs from Shan chronicles and other reports, suggest the existence of a trade route between India and China, wherein Manipur seems to have played transit role.³⁹ The narrative goes on to claim that in Bactria (Zariaspa), *Chang-Kien* was surprised to see cloths and bamboos that were found in Yunan in southern China. On further

³⁸ Chang Ch'ien, in 138 BCE was deputed by Han Emperor, Wu-Ti, to contact the Yueh-chih and solicit their alliance against common enemy Hsiung-nu (Huns): Gogoi. *The Tai and the Tai kingdoms...* p. 72.

³⁹ Pelliot Paul. 1904. Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde à la fin du VIII^e siècle. In *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*. Tome. 4. pp. 131-413.

enquiry, Chang-Kien was told that those articles, initially from Yunan were available in eastern India, from where it was brought by merchants of *Ta Hsia* (Bactria).⁴⁰ Gangmumei quotes Gordon in suggesting that proto-historic trade contact eastward from India appeared to have existed during the Mauryan period (413-185 BCE) when there was extensive trade with Rome. Chinese records dating back to the 2nd century BCE mentions imports of cloth to India from Sichuan.

The proposition is that a *South-West Silk Route* had existed between India and China, long before Marco-Polo had discovered his *Silk route* over the Karakoram in the 13th Century. Gogoi observes that the ancient country of Nan-Chao (738-937 CE) received Buddhist influence from India through Eastern Bengal, Manipur and Arakan route. He believes that land route from China to India connecting Tang Court with Pyu capital was opened mostly with the help of Pyu conscripts. From the description of this route, it is highly probable that the route connected Prome in Upper Burma and then led to Chindwin and Manipur.⁴¹ Recent research on the history of Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE.) brings to the light existence of routes from Chengdou in Sichuan Province to Kunming, Dali, Baoshan and Tengchou in Yunan leading into Burma and then to India.⁴² The southern-most route passed through Ruili on Burma-Yunan border and then into Shan state in Burma; thence crossed Chin Hills and Chindwin River to Manipur in Northeast India.⁴³

A.R. Phayre believes that there was a route from India to the northern part of Kobo Valley, which was from time to time under the control of Manipur.⁴⁴ Harvey suggests that horse carriage was

⁴⁰ Luce Boulnois. (1966). *The Silken Road* (Translation from French). London: George Allen and Unwin. p. 31.

Gogoi. *The Tai and the Tai kingdoms...* p. 71.

⁴² Rehman Sobhan. (2000). *Rediscovering The Southern Silk Route: Integrating Asia's Transport Infrastructure*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited. p. 2

⁴³ B.G. Verghese. (1998). *India's North Resurgent*. Delhi: Konark Publishers.

⁴⁴ Phayre. *History of Burma...* p. 4.

used on this route. Two routes were lying along Irrawaddy and Salween Rivers; a third down Chindwin River went through Manipur, and it took three-month caravan journey to Afghanistan, where silk of China was exchanged for Roman gold.⁴⁵ All these indicate the existence of a regular trade route between Manipur and China through Burma. Regular trade and social intercourses are exemplified by skilled craftsmanship of Manipuris in silk manufacturing and weaving in the ancient and medieval pasts.⁴⁶

2. Geo-Strategic Location

The kingdom of Manipur had played crucial defensive and offensive strategic roles in the balance of power amongst neighbouring countries and its expanding empire. Since the onset of the third decade of the 19th century, Manipur was encapsulated into a broader framework of British frontier policy. It became a British protectorate kingdom and played significant roles in expanding British rule in Burma. During the Second World War, Manipur was a crucial defensive frontier of the Allied powers against the combined forces of Japan and Indian National Army. After the collapse of the British Empire in 1947, its successor, the Dominion of India, having realised the geo-strategic importance of Manipur, took Manipur under its rule. According to the *White Paper on the Indian States*, "It [Manipur] is surrounded for the most part by tribal hill areas in Assam on the west; on the east, the tribal territories of Burma bound it. The security arrangements of this area require the special attention of the Government of India,

⁴⁵ G.E. Harvey. (1825) *History of Burma From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824: The Beginning of the English Conquest*. London: Longmans Green and Co. p. 8.

⁴⁶ (1) In 1868-69 the Political Agent to Manipur in his Administrative Report stated that about 300 persons were employed in the silk culture, and they were paid about Rupees 300 annually and exempted from the operation of *Lalloop*, or 'forced labour': *Annual Report of Munnipore Political Agency For 1868-69*. (2) Harvey also mentions employment of Manipuri silk workers in the royal court of Burma who introduced the 'acheik' pattern: Harvey. *History of Burma ...* p. 133.

and it was therefore decided to take it over for Central administration. The ruler signed the Instrument of Merger on 21st September 1949, and the administration was taken over by the Chief Commissioner on behalf of the Dominion Government on 15th October 1949.”⁴⁷ With the passage of time, Manipur became a vital gateway to India’s Act East Policy towards the Southeast Asian countries.

V. REMEMBERING BOUNDARIES

The present boundary of the state of Manipur⁴⁸ is inherited from the erstwhile kingdom of Manipur, which was demarcated in modern lines during the British colonial period. Before British rule, the kingdom of Manipur, throughout the long course of history spanning over several centuries, was territorially expressive, though marked by the absence of permanence in shape and size. In this regards, Pemberton’s views sound convincing. According to him, “Over the years the territorial boundaries of Manipur have fluctuated with the fortunes of her rulers.”⁴⁹ The absence of information renders it difficult to ascertain the exact spaces, sizes, demarcation lines and composition of territories corresponding to different historical epochs. However, there are historical references that would suggest that from time to time the territorial boundary or area of domination of the kingdom was extended beyond the existing boundary. This perception of an extensive boundary in the pre-colonial past has been handed down in the form of collective memory, which is reflected in demands, writings, and statements.

Meidingu (Maharaja) Bodh Chandra revealed an example of promoting collective memory and expression of nostalgia. In

⁴⁷ (1950). *White Paper on Indian States*. Delhi: Government of India Press. p. 48.

⁴⁸ Though certain pillar on ground are disputed because of misplacement and subjected to rectification.

⁴⁹ Capt. R. B. Pemberton. (1991 Reprint). *Report on Eastern Frontier of British India*. Gauhati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies.

1948⁵⁰ he proclaimed, “[t]he political history from 33 CE suggests that Manipur had dominion over a wide area extending as far as the southern portion of China in the North, the gold mines in the Sibsagar valley, the river Chindwin in the East and South, and Chandrapur [*Cachar*] in the West.” The interpretation is that Manipur’s territorial limit was extended up to the banks of river Brahmaputra in upper Assam and nearby areas. The reference to substantiate the point is the reproduction of the texts of draft proposal of Anglo-Manipur Treaty (1762), that reads, “So soon as the English shall enable me to work the gold mine on the banks of the River Barrampooter [*Brahmaputra River*] in the Dominions of Meckley [*Manipur*].”⁵¹ The account of Michael Syme, dated 1800, titled *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava*, (sent by the Governor-General of India, in the Year 1795), would suggest that ‘Keenduen’ (Chindwin) river was supposedly the natural boundary between the kingdoms of Ava (Burma) and Manipur.⁵² Report of Walter Hamilton, submitted to the British Parliament in 1820, describes the boundaries of Manipur as, “Munnipoor (or Cassay): The province is bounded on the north by Cachar; on the south by Arakan, and the rude tribes bordering to that country; on the west it has the Bengal districts of Tiperah [*Tripura*] and Silhet [*Sylhet; now in Bangladesh*]; and on the east it is separated from the original Birman [*Burmese*] territories by the river Keenduen [*Chindwin*], which takes a south-eastern course, unites its waters with those of the Irrawaddy, a short way above the town of Sembewghewn.”⁵³ This description of great territorial past was

⁵⁰ Proclamation on the occasion of the inauguration of the First Manipur State Assembly on October 18, 1948.

⁵¹ Para Six of the Proposals under Anglo Manipuri Treaty, 1762 (signed on 11, September 1763).

⁵² Michael Symes, Esquire. (1800). *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava*, (sent by the Governor- General of India, in the Year 1795). Volume 1. London: W. Bulmer and Co. p. 3.

⁵³ Walter Hamilton, Esquire. (1829). *A Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindostan and the Adjacent Countries*. Vol. II. London: John Murry. pp. 765-767.

incorporated in the reports of Captain R.B. Pemberton (1835)⁵⁴ and Captain E.W. Dun (1886).⁵⁵

There are attempts by local writers, to bring into light the territorial extents of Manipur kingdom under various kings. These are based on the study of local literary sources, maps charted by Europeans,⁵⁶ British administrative reports, and other secondary texts. The study points out the extensive territorial boundary, dating from around mid-fifteenth century to mid-eighteenth century, which was subsequently followed by periods of decline, diminution and relative *status quo* after 1896. This study makes references to the glorious reigns of (a) Meidingu Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (1st century CE), (b) Meidingu Kyamba (1467-1508 CE), (c) Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652 CE) and (d) Meidingu Garibniwaz (Pamheiba) (1709-1748 CE).

To illustrate; (a) Oral memories, historical sources and certain secondary accounts which have been published from time to time suggest that boundaries during the reign of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (1st century CE) extended up to the borders of *Yunan* (China) on the east, *Kamarup* (ancient lower Assam) on the west, *Tibet* (China) on the north and ancient country of Tripura (Tui-Phra) on the west. It remains difficult to forward the claim based on those accounts accurately. For the later period, some references would suggest that the sphere of influence of the kingdom of Manipur was extensive. Grant Brown believes that Manipur had occupied Upper Burma at some point in time. He thinks, "About the beginning of the Burmese era (639 CE) the place is said to have been destroyed by Manipuris and Chins, and a new seat was chosen at Teinnyin with the assistance of the Mohnyin Sawbwa."⁵⁷ (b) Boundary of Manipur during the reign of

⁵⁴ Pemberton. *Report on Eastern Frontier of British India*.

⁵⁵ Captain E.W. Dun. (1981 Reprint). *Gazetteer of Manipur*. Delhi: Vivek Publishing Company.

⁵⁶ Such as; (a) *Historical Geography of the Burmese Countries at Several Epochs*, (b) Rennell's maps of Hindoostan 1788.

⁵⁷ The place mention here is Newpet formerly known as New Yajagy, Head Quarter of erstwhile Kale Sub-Division: G.E.R. Grant Brown. (1913

Meidingu Kyamba (1467-1508 CE) were extended to (i) *Thibomei* (Kohima; present capital of Nagaland State) on the north; (ii) *Ningthi* (Chindwin: in Myanmar) River on the east, (iii) *Chin Hills*, *Changhai* and *Cholam* (now in Mizoram) on the south-east, and (d) *Silchar* and *Maibong* on the west.

(c) Boundary of Manipur during the reign of Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652 CE) were: (i) Thibomei (Kohima) on the North, (ii) Nariya and Tazu Rivers on the north-east, (iii) Mungkhong (Maunkiang) and Kyang (Kunfat) in Kabo Valley on the east, (iv) Changhat on the south-east, (v) Badarpur (in Cachar District) on the west, and (vi) foothill of Maibong (North Cachar Hills) range on the north-west.

(d) Boundary of Manipur during the reign of Meidingu Pamheiba (Garibniwaz: 1709-1748 CE) were: (i) Sadiya (on the right bank of river Luhit) on the north; (ii) western foothills of Patkai range and Tuensang ranges (now in Nagaland) on the north-east; (iii) Maungkiang area and beyond Kendat (now in Myanmar) on the south, (iv) Kalewa town and Gangaw (now in Myanmar) on the south-east; (v) Chin hills on the extreme south; (vi) Manthpur on the south of Chittagong on the south-west; (vii) Kusiya and Barak rivers on the west (now in Cachar District of Assam), and (viii) Maibung, Diphu, Dimapur, Sibsagar (now in Nagaland and Assam) and the left bank of Brahmaputra on the north-east.⁵⁸

After the reign of Meidingu Pamheiba (Garibniwaz) Manipur became embroiled in a phase of the internal struggle for the throne, inability to withstand invasions and domination by powerful external forces; which had adverse impacts on diminishing the size and shape of territory. During the British protectorate system,⁵⁹ the territorial extent of Manipur Kingdom was considerably reduced. Manipur was overrun and devastated

compiled). *Burma Gazetteer Upper Chindwin District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Government Printing. pp. 8-9.

⁵⁸ B. Kullachandra Sharma. (Unpublished manuscript) *Dominion of Manipur through Several Historical Epochs*. p. 9-10.

⁵⁹ The beginning can be traced in the creation of Manipur Levy in 1823 to help Manipur restore sovereignty from Burmese rule.

by the Burmese for seven years (1819-1826). When sovereignty was restored to a certain extent during the reign of Meidingu Gambhir Singh (1825-1834), the coveted territories of Chandrapur (now in Assam) and Kobo Valley (now in Myanmar) were permanently lost to British and Burma. The phase of British protectorate was marked by delimitation of the boundary to suit British colonial interests. *Annual Report of the Munnipore Political Agency for 1868-69*, reported, "The territory which constitutes the Native State of Munnipore [*Manipur*] consists of a large extent of hill country and the valley proper of Munnipore... Its boundaries on the north are the Angami country [*now in Nagaland state*] and the hills overlooking the valley of Assam; on the south the boundary is undefined, and abuts on the country inhabited by the various tribes of Loosai Kookies; and on the west, the British province of Cachar; and on the east, by the Kubbo [*Kabo*] valley and part of Upper Burma."

VI. RETAINING STATUS QUO

The contemporary boundary of Manipur is the result of the struggle for control of territory amongst contentious power blocs wherein British enjoyed an upper hand in securing its imperial interest. The struggles lasted for decades; which was marked by an imbalance of power amongst contentious forces. Hence a considerably weakened kingdom of Manipur, despite raising protests and appeals to reclaim its past glories, had to accept in succeeding phases the *fait accompli* of boundary demarcations that was predetermined by the powerful imperial force. There was no other option to accept defeat and defend and to develop what was left in order to reconstruct a new beginning. The emotive mixed feeling of defeat, deprivation and *fait accompli* reverberated from time to time through the enactment of collective memories by succeeding generation of patriots. Several decades later, after the collapse of British Empire, a local weekly *Resistance*, in 1987, recollected, "after the arrival of the British in the 19th century, the consciousness of a frontier gradually slipped out of the mind of Manipuri people. They simply acquiesced with

whatever manipulation the British made to their boundaries in furtherance of the imperial interests.”⁶⁰ This brings to focus on the collective memory pertaining to boundaries briefly, (a) the Northern Boundary, (b) The Western Boundary, (c) The Eastern Boundary, and (d) The Southern Boundary.

1. The Northern Boundary

The perception is that in the past parts of Naga Hills and beyond were located in the kingdom of Manipur. During the reign of Meidingu (Maharaja) Gambhir Singh, a stone tablet inscribed with texts and symbols was erected at the village of Thibomei (present Kohima) as a mark of his northern boundary.⁶¹ Some records suggest that in 1835 the forest between Doyeng and Dhunsiri formed the boundary between Manipur and Assam. This view is more or less corroborated by Sir James Johnstone, who believed that “Manipuris in former days did penetrate into the Naga Hills, and exacted tribute when they felt strong enough to do so. All the villages have Manipur names in addition to their own...”⁶² However, the penetration, control or domination could not remain permanent due to British interests in Naga Hills and Angamis’ assertions. Frequent skirmishes occurred for area domination. To settle the matter, Lt. Bigge was deputed to march across Naga hills in the cold weather of 1841-42,⁶³ and finally, a boundary line was laid down in 1842.⁶⁴ The line could not bring an end to complications for some decades. In order to carry out a fresh boundary demarcation, “Captain Butler, Deputy Commissioner of the Hills District and Dr Brown, Political Agent of Manipur,

⁶⁰ 1978. *Resistance*. Vol. III. Imphal: Pan Manipuri Youth League. p. 3.

⁶¹ The stone inscription has been removed and kept in the Nagaland State Museum, Kohima.

⁶² Major General Sir James Johnstone. (1983 reprint). *Manipur and the Naga Hills*. Delhi: Cultural Publishing House. pp 22-23.

⁶³ Alexander Mackenzie. (2001 Reprint). *The North East Frontier of India*. Delhi: Mittal. p. 107.

⁶⁴ Lt. Bigge representing the British side and Captain Gordon representing Manipur: L. Chandramani. (1970). *The Boundaries of Manipur*. Imphal: Pan Manipuri Youth League. p. 41.

accordingly met in the cold weather of 1869-70”⁶⁵. They differed in opinions and decided to appoint a Boundary Commissioner to settle the disputed points on the ground: “Boundary was, after much correspondence, eventually settled in July 1872. The line of 1842 was maintained in all essential points so far as it was clearly identified. Manipur afterwards objected to the boundary, but her objections were overruled.”⁶⁶ However, the matter did not end there. According to *Annual Administration Report 1877-78*, the question of boundary between Manipur and Naga Hills, which had been a constant source of trouble and dispute, was amicably and satisfactorily settled during the previous year and received the approval of the Viceroy. However, the boundary was again arbitrarily altered by the British after the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891. Subsequently, the northern boundary of Manipur was shifted inside the territory of Manipur at Mao Thanna, which is about eighteen miles south from Kohima (Thibomei).

2. The Western and South-western Boundary

It is considered, that the boundary on the south-west was extended beyond Tipaimukh in Pherzawl district. A stone erection, belonging to the time of Meidingu Pamheiba (Garibniwaz), and inscribed in archaic Meitei script, was found at Vangai Range near Tipaimukh. The assumption is that such pillars were usually erected near a stockade or military post, while actual control, dominion or sphere of influence of a stockade or post was enforced beyond such erections. Manipur princes, on the eve of the Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26), occupied the whole of south Cachar. Gambhir Singh (1825-1834) settled his followers, established Thanna at Chandrapur, and made attempts to retain control of Cachar. The British, however, had a different agenda, to restrict the influence of Manipur. Finally, the British imposed the treaty of 1833, which reads, “... the two ranges of Hills, the one called the Kalanaga Range, and the other called the Noon-jai

⁶⁵ Mackenzie. *The North East Frontier of India*. p. 122.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 122-123.

Range, which is situated between the eastern bend of the Barak and the western bend of the Barak, we [*the Governor-General and Supreme Council of Hindoostan*] give up all claim on the part of the Honourable Company thereunto, and we will make these Hills over in possession to the Rajah [King of Manipur], and give him the line of the Jiri and the western bend of the Barak as a boundary, provide that the Rajah agrees to the whole of what is written in this paper...⁶⁷ Since then, Jiri constitutes the westernmost boundary of Manipur.

3. The Eastern Boundary

Kabo Valley was ruled by the kingdom of Manipur, for considerable periods, from time to time. The valley had been a matter of contention between the kingdoms of Ava (Burma) and Manipur. Grant Brown's narrative of Upper Burma would suggest that on the eve of the Burmese era (639 CE) Manipur had subjugated parts of Upper Chindwin region.⁶⁸ Kabo valley was annexed to the kingdom of Manipur in 1485 CE by an agreement between King Kiyamba of Manipur and King Chaofa Khe Khomba of Pong. Historical records suggest that it was lost to Burma during Burmese occupation of Manipur from 1819-26. After the defeat of Ava in 1826, Gambhir Singh regained possession of Kabo Valley. The Burmese could not accept it and the colluded with the British to control Kabo Valley. The British Government of India conceded to the demand of the Burmese

⁶⁷ 'No. CXXII. A Translation of the Conditions entered into by Raja Gumbheer Sing of Munnipore, on the British Government Agreeing to Annex to Munnipore the two ranges of Hills situated between the eastern and western bens of the Barak, dated 18th April 1833.' C.U. Aitchison. (1892). *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Related to India and Neighbouring Countries*. Volume 1. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India. Pp 315-16.

⁶⁸ The place mention here is Newpet formerly known as New Yajagy, Head Quarter of erstwhile Kale Sub-Division: G.E.R. Grant Brown. (1913 compiled). *Burma Gazetteer Upper Chindwin District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Government Printing. pp. 8-9.

government, and, in 1834, ceded away the Valley from Manipur.⁶⁹ Captain R Boileau Pemberton conducted the first formal demarcation in modern lines as Commissioner of Boundary in 1834. The line demarcated by Pemberton is known as *Pemberton Line*. Accordingly, the boundary between Manipur and Burma was defined as;

“(1) The eastern foot of the chain of mountains which rise immediately from the western side of the plain of the Kubo Valley. Within this line is included Moreh and all the country to the westward of it; (2) On the south a line extending from the eastern foot of the same hills at the point where the river, called by the Burmahs Nansawing, and by the Munnipoories Numsaulung, enters the plain, up to its sources and across the hills due west down to the Kathe' khyauing (Munnipooree River); and (3). On the north the line of boundary will begin at the foot of the same hills at the northern extremity of the Kubo Valley, and pass due north up to the first range of bills, east of that upon which stand the villages of Chatao Noanghue, Noanghur of the tribe called by the Munnipoorees Loohooppa, and by the Burmahs Lagumsauny, now tributary to Munnipoor.”⁷⁰

After 1834, the Burmese Government, from time to time, indulged directly or indirectly in instigating cross-border raids and attacks on Manipur villages and police posts. To restore order and maintain tranquillity, British Government instituted a Boundary Commission in September 1881 with Sir James Johnstone as Boundary Commissioner, to demarcate a proper boundary on this front. He submitted a report in 1882, which was not agreeable to both the parties. However, after the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891,

⁶⁹ The British Government granted a stipend of 500 Sicca Rupees per annum to the Rajah of Manipur for the loss of Kabo Valley. Even after independence of India in 1947, the Government of India continued to pay the amount to the Rajah of Manipur till the merger of Manipur in the Indian Union in 1949.

⁷⁰ Aitchison. *A Collection of Treaties...* p. 360.

the Manipuris were compelled to agree with a boundary survey conducted by Captain MacNabb, the then Deputy Commissioner of Upper Chindwin District and Lt. Col. Maxwell, the then Political Agent of Manipur. The Commission, in 1896, agreed upon the definition of the boundary between Burma and Manipur and completed demarcation.⁷¹ The report of the survey was submitted in 1896 to the competent authorities. Both British Burma and British India Governments gave their consent to this survey. The survey began from the north to a few hundred yards south of Kongkan Thanna village. Boundary Pillar (BP) No. 1(old) was placed on the Tuilut stream. It ended at boundary pillar No. 38 (old) which was located near an aqueduct connected to Tuisa or Tinzin river on the extreme southern limits of Manipur boundary. Regarding Manipur–Somra Tract boundary, a notification by Government of Burma, dated 1918, reaffirmed, “On the west— by the State of Manipur and the higher range of hills forming the watershed between the Namtaleik or Tuzu River on the west and the Nanwe River on the East.”⁷² The eastern boundary of Manipur was thus more or less settled by the second decade of the 20th century.

4. The Southern Boundary

The stone inscription of Meidingu (Maharaja) Chandra Kirti at Chibujang (Behiang) in Singhat Sub-Division of Churachandpur District exemplifies the extent of territorial boundaries on the south. However, the southern frontier was always vulnerable to attacks by Lushais and Kamhaws or Sooties. To restrain such attacks, several Thannas (police post) were installed at several

⁷¹ Definition of the Boundary between Burma (the Kabo Valley) and the Manipur as agreed upon by the Boundary Commission of 1896. Signed by H. Maxwell, Lt-Colonel, Political Agent and Superintendent of State, Commissioner and J.C.D. MacNabb, Captain, Officiating Deputy Commissioner, Upper Chindwin Commissioner., dated 16th April 1896. Source: Foreign Political. K.W. External A. August 1896. Nos. 268-277.

⁷² Notification, Rangoon dated 8th January 1918, signed by W.F. Rice, Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma.

villages, such as Chakpi, Kalanaga, and Numfow. To strengthen control and regulate law and order, a Boundary Commission was instituted in 1894.⁷³ The Commission demarcated a boundary between Manipur and Lushai Hills; along the course of Tin Zin River to its source in Yomadung range. From there, it moves four miles south-westwards to the crest of the range, and finally along the course of Yangdung River to its mouth on Manipur River. The then Government of India approved it in 1898. Since then, the territorial boundary on the south has been more or less stable.

5. Pal-thongs

It is believed that *Pal Thongs* (gates or stockades or posts) were erected along strategic borders both for defence and regulation of ingress and egress of people. It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of the origin of *Pal Thongs* and exact numbers, locations and strengths throughout the history. Old inscriptions and royal chronicle suggest for two fortified border gates, namely, (a) *Eastern Gate*, and (b) *Western Gate*. A brief account of these gates are as follows;

Eastern Gate: It is believed that *Khoibu Pal* (Khoibu post or fort) was the outer fort and *Tarao Pal* was the inner fort on the *Eastern Great Gate*. A stone inscription is found at Khoibu, a 'Maring' village, about fifty-three kilometres from Imphal, on the south-east. Line six of the inscription No.1, translated into English reads, "Khoibu fort is the protector of the eastern great gate."⁷⁴ The location of the village is significant for the strategic reason; it probably served the gateway to Kobo valley, Shan kingdom, Ava and beyond.

⁷³ The Boundary Commission was led by Mr. B.S. Carey, Political Officer Chin Hills and Mr. A. Porteous, Officiating Political Agent at Manipur.

⁷⁴ The inscription is about; (a) the God which had been worshiped from generation to generation since the time of king Ura-Konthouba (568-658 A.D.), (b) *Eastern Great Gate* and its construction, and (c) Maring people and distribution of their customary duties.

Western Gate: It is believed that *Haochong Pal* (Haochong Fort) was the outer fort and *Kharam Pal* (Kharam Fort) was the inner fort on the *Western Great Gate*. Royal chronicle *Chietharol Kumbaba* recorded the construction/establishment of *Haochong Pal* during the time of Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1662 AD). There is a stone inscription Haochong, which is preserved in a local temple for a deity known as *Rising Ri*.⁷⁵ The inscription is about royal order proclaimed by king Khagemba. It emphasises the importance of the *Western Great Gate*, which was protected by two great gods, namely, Koubru and Loyalakpa.

The British account of 19th century informs that Manipur kingdom had installed several strategic police posts (thannas). Clair Grimwood notes, “At every five miles the Manipuris had *Thanahs* to keep a lookout against enemies, and acting as stages for the *dak*-runners.”⁷⁶ Captain E.W. Dun’s report, published in 1886,⁷⁷ notes the following important police posts, namely;

(i) ***Chakpi Police Post:*** It was a small frontier post situated in Yumadoug hills, 9 miles from the mouth of the pass into Kabo valley by Nasinga route.

(ii) ***Chattik Police Post:*** Situated in Chattik (a Tangkhul Village bordering Burma), a half mile south of the village of the same name, on the eastern edge of Yumadoug range. The stockade is about 40 yards long and 25 yards broad. Its common strength is one Subedar, one Jemadar, one Havildar, one Bugler, and sixty sepoy.

(iii) ***Jiri Police Post:*** It was situated on the western frontiers of Manipur bordering Assam. It was erected as a consequence of the Treaty of 1833, according to which an earlier post at Chandrapur

⁷⁵ The deity is believed to be that of Khagemba, the establisher of the village.

⁷⁶ Ethel St. Clair Grimwood. (1891). *My Three Years in Manipur and Escape from the Recent Mutiny*. Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz. p. 25.

⁷⁷ Dun. *Gazetteer of Manipur*.

(Assam) had to be shifted to within the territorial limits of present-day Jiribam.

(iv) ***Kalanaga Stockade***: Situated on the top of the range that lies on the north of Cachar road, and usually manned by fifty men, its primary purpose was to check incursions from the west mainly by Lushai people.

(v) ***Kangkum Police Post***: Situated at Phungyar Sub-Division (Kasom area in Ukhrul district), it is assumed that the post was established during the period of Meidingu (Maharaja) Pamheiba (Garibniwaz) (1709-1748 CE).

(vi) ***Khoupum Stockade***: Situated on Imphal-Cachar road⁷⁸ between the valley and the western region of Manipur, it was an important strategic position.⁷⁹ Though earlier unfortified and manned by not more than five men; it was subsequently strengthened in response to Loosais (Lushais) incursions. In 1868-69 it was garrisoned by fifty sepoy. In 1898, it was garrisoned by one native officer, one Havildar, two Naiks, and twenty-two sepoy.⁸⁰

(vii) ***Kongal Police Post***: It was situated on the banks of Nummeah River (Namia River), on a broad flat end of a spur, about 30 feet above the level of the valley and a few 100 yards from the northern boundary of Kobo Valley.⁸¹ The Burmese call this portion of Yumadoug hills Malian range. The post,

⁷⁸ It is also known as *Tongjei Maril*

⁷⁹ Ethel St. Clair Grimwood and fugitive sepoy who were fleeing from Manipur retaliation in 1891 were attacked from this post.

⁸⁰ Letter No. 2792, dated Shillong, 30th November 1898, from the General Officer Commanding Assam District to the secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

⁸¹ It is an important frontier post forming one of the third or outer lines along the eastern edge of the Yumadoug range. Kongal Thanna had always been within the Manipur boundary, whether by the line of Pemberton's map or the letter of the Treaty of 1834: Dun. *Gazetteer of Manipur*. p. 131.

garrisoned by one Jemadar and twenty sepoy was vulnerable to Burmese attacks. On the morning of 14th December 1877, the post was attacked at the instigation of the Chief of Samjok (Thangduat), thereby affecting trade. Following the attacks, it remained in the hands of the Chief of Samjok (Thangduat) for some time but was re-established by 1881⁸².

(viii) **Mao Police Post:** Situated on the Imphal-Dimapur road bordering the then Naga Hill district of Assam (now Nagaland State), it was established in 1873-74 with a force of fifty sepoy, to check raids from the villages of Papalongmai or Kenomah and Mozoma. After some months of its establishment, the villagers of Viswemah attacked it, but they were repulsed⁸³.

(ix) **Moreh Police Post:** It was located on the eastern edge of Yumadoun range and northwest of Tamoo (Tumu now in Burma). It was situated on the broad flat end of a spur coming down from the hills, about 30 feet above the level of the valley, between Kujeiok [Khujairok] and Leirok [Lairok] streams which unite with its north-eastern corner. It was garrisoned by one Subedar, one Jemadar, one Havildar, and forty sepoy.

(x) **Nasinga Police Post:** It was located on the eastern edge of Yumadoun range, a half day journey from Pussa and a ten hours journey from Tamoo (Tumu now in Burma).

(xi) **Numfow Police Post:** It was a post established during the reign of Meidingu (Maharaja) Chandrakirti Singh, to check incursions and attacks on Numfow village by Kamhow tribes in 1855 and 1856. It was garrisoned by two hundred sepoy (soldiers).

⁸² Note on Letter No. 101330, dated 9th April 1930, from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign department.

⁸³ Manipur Administration Report, 1873-74. p. 7.

(xii) **Prowi Police Post:** Situated to the north-east of Tangkhul inhabited areas, it was garrisoned by one Subedar, one Havildar and fifty sepoy.

(xiii) **Kangkum Police Post:** Situated at Phungyar Sub-Division (Kasom area), it is considered to have been established during the reign of Meidingu (Maharaja) Pamheiba (Garibniwaz).

There were many more police posts installed in the hill areas of Manipur, namely; Kala Naga Thanna, Kangbam Thanna, Karong Thanna, Keithelmanbi Thanna, Maithaipham Thanna, Mayangkhang Thanna, Namfow Thanna, Tap Thanna, Yangpokpi Thanna, and so on. It can be interpreted, that all the posts were organised into three concentric circles, by the supposition that Imphal was the navel of these circles. The circles were, (a) *Inner Circle*, (b) *Middle Circle*, and (c) *Outer Circle*. First, *Inner Circle* was composed of posts at the strategic points of the valley. Second, *Middle Circle* was composed of Kangkum Thanna, Karong Thanna, Keithelmanbi Thanna, Khoupum Thanna, Mayangkhang Thanna, Mombi Thanna, etc. Those were located at the strategic points between the central valley the adjacent hilly regions. The *Outer circle* was composed of Jiri Thanna, Mao Thanna, Kongal Thanna, Chattrik Thanna, Prowi Thanna, Nasinga Thanna, Yangoupokpi Thanna, Moreh Thanna, Chakpi Thanna, Numfow Thanna, etc. They were located at the strategic points on the border of Manipur.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the 19th Century was a crucial juncture for the kingdom of Manipur. It was a century of unprecedented incidents exemplifying a new complicated course of history, such as; (a) destruction of absolute sovereignty, internal strife that left the people vulnerable to disturbances, invasion or aggression by powerful empires such as Burma and the British, (b) establishment of regular intercourses with British and subsequent subjugation under their protectorate system, (c) official promotion of the appellation *Manipur* both by British and Indians across the globe, (d) geo-topographical explorations,

trigonometrical surveys, mapping, opening up of more routes for regular commercial transactions and movement of imperial troops, (d) an increase in the geo-strategic significance of Manipur to defend empire building, and (e) subjugation, ceding away of coveted territories and imposition of boundary demarcation that culminated into the existing size and shape of Manipur.

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Background of the People of Manipur

There are views that trace the genesis of the people of Manipur to divine creation. They propounded the theory of the evolution of a Manipur cosmos in time immemorial and argued for a monolithic creation of the Meiteis and their cognate groups as a sacrosanct body organ created in the pious self-image of the creator god. These views shape the popular perception of a vast chunk of the population. They are, however, contested by historians who rely on scientific explanations of the evolution of people overtimes and spaces. Archaeological remains, historical records, oral traditions, cultural practices, diverse languages, *etc.* would suggest that Manipur has been inhabited by diverse groups of people coming from different directions. Logically, a historian had to invest in tracing the genesis of the diversity by various waves of migration in different epochs of the past. So far, Manipur has been studied by fitting it into the larger canvas of the widespread distributions of people and migrations across Southeast Asia in general and that of the Northeast.

This chapter studies the historical process of the evolution of the people of Manipur over a period of several thousand years starting from the developmental phase of Palaeolithic to 18th century CE. The chapter is organised into the following sections; (I) stone age cultures, and (II) racial and linguistic groups. The section on stone age cultures is studied under the sub-sections; (1) Palaeolithic, (2) Haobinhian (Middle stone age or Mesolithic), and (3) Neolithic. The racial and linguistic groups are studied under the sub-sections; (1) Austro-Mongoloids, (2) Tibeto-Burmans, (3) Chinese-Siamese, and (4) Indo-Aryans. The sub-section on Austro-Mongoloids studies the blending of Australoids and Mongoloids as found amongst people composing Mon, Khmer and Indonesian. The sub-section on Tibeto-Burman studies the blending of Bodos, Naga, Karen and Chin. The sub-section on

Chinese-Siamese studies the blending of Tai, Shan and Lai. Lastly, the sub-section on Indo-Aryans studies the late phase of the migration and absorption of migration of people from Hindustan into Manipur.

I. STONE AGE CULTURES

Topographically, the eastern half of Manipur is situated at the catchment area of the Manipur River, which is a tributary of the Chindwin-Irrawaddy River system. It must have provided a fertile ground for the spread of pre-historic creatures and beings that were found in the Chindwin River basin. The proposition is that Manipur was closely connected to adjoining regions, and, that the former cannot be completely isolated from the spread of stone age cultures that were flourishing far and wide in the latter. For instance, fossil remains of an approximately twelve million years old primate genus *Pliopithecus*¹ found in the North-eastern continuation of Pondaung Hills in Myanmar² suggest that the regions in and around Manipur were inhabited by vertebrate animals and primates for a long geological epoch. The region across the Chindwin basin must have been an excellent pastoral ground for vertebrate animals and primates. The region of the Shwebo-Monywa Plain in Myanmar had many low hills covered with deciduous forest where animals including hominoids might have lived and taken refuge. In this region, a stone age culture called *Anyathian* had existed since the Pleistocene epoch.

Based on the remains of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultural artefacts from Manipur, Gangmumei suggested that the earliest settlers were the Australoids, who were followed by the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloids from around 1000 BCE. Haddon describes this group of people as having abundant facial and body hair that was sometimes curly hairs, wavy or straight, though in some cases it was almost absent; dark chocolate brown colour skin; medium

¹(1999). *Studies in Myanmar History*. Vol. I. U Kyi Win (01029). Yangon: Innwa Publishing House. p. 2.

²About 150 miles, from where *Pondaungia ramapithecus* was previously discovered.

stature; *dolichocephalic*; flat retreating forehead, prominent brow ridges, prognathous, nose depressed at root and *platyrrhine* nostrils; a fairly uniform people who may be regarded as belonging primarily to the Pre-Dravidian stock. Gordon also asserted that ancient South Asian populations probably spoke the Austro-Asian languages when they moved into Southeast Asia during a period as old as the Palaeolithic times.

For the study of the stone age culture of Manipur, the author relies primarily on the findings of an eminent archaeologist O. Kumar Singh who had conducted a series of archaeological excavations in Manipur. The author adheres to Kumar's classification of the stone age cultures of Manipur into three cultural sequences, namely; (a) Palaeolithic, (b) Hoabinhian and (c) Neolithic.

1. Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age)

Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) artefacts were discovered at Khangkhui Cave (Ukhrul District), Songbu Cave near Sajik Tampak (Chandel District), open-air sites at Machi (Tengnoupal District), and Nongpok Keithelmanbi (Thoubal District). The findings at Khangkhui Cave suggest a cultural affinity with those of Koornul Cave (Andhra Pradesh), Choukontien³ culture (locality 15, China), Sangiran of Java, and Tjabenge of Celebes. The typical tool types consist of hand axe, chopper/chopping tools, scrapers, blades, points, borers, and burins. The findings of charred animal bones suggest that Khangkhui Cave people had the

³(1) *Zhoukoudian* (Choukoutien), 50 kms south-west of Beijing; fossil remains have been discovered since 1929 of early *Palaeolithic Ape Man*, his stone implements, and large quantities of *paleontological* fossils. In 1934 fossilized bones of Late Paleolithic *Homo sapiens* and large quantities of stone implements and bone artefacts were unearthed. Bozan Jian, Shao Xunzheng, and Hu Hua. (1986). *A Concise History of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press. p. 5. (2) Also refer J.N. Choudhury. (1991) Pre-Historic and Early Tribal Migrations in North-East India. In Jai Prakash Singh and Gautam Sengupta. Ed. *Archaeology of North-eastern India*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications.

knowledge of using fire. Their economy was based on hunting and gathering.

The Khangkhui cave culture might have belonged to the Upper Palaeolithic culture. However, no definite date could be ascertained.⁴ Jiten believes that faunal remains obtained from these caves [*Khangkhui*] which were examined by G.L. Badam of Deccan College, Pune, belonging to *Cervus*, *Sus bovide* and wild fowls. According to him, these species could not be older than the late Pleistocene comparing to those from Kurnool cave. O.K. Singh believes in migration and spread of culture from Khangkhui Cave to other areas. He believes that there were certain typotechnological similarities of some of the tools found at Khangkhui cave and Nongpok Keithelmanbi. According to him, there was an upliftment of the hills including Khangkhui cave during the Late Pleistocene time. It might have changed the environment and temperature of the cave, thereby, rendering it uncomfortable and resulting in the migration of people to more suitable areas of lower altitude. The migrant must have followed the course of Thoubal River and reached Nongpok Keithelmanbi.

2. Hoabinhian (Middle Stone Age or Mesolithic)

Since the closing phase of the Upper Pleistocene, the Indo-Myanmar border regions were inhabited by the people who practised the Hoabinhian⁵ culture. They flourished until displacement by the Neolithic immigrants from China and Southeast Asia who had brought with them common eastern Asiatic Neolithic stone tools. The Hoabinhian culture in Manipur is evident from the archaeological findings in the open-air spaces

⁴ O.K. Singh. (1988). Aspects of Archaeology in Manipur. In Sanajaoba Naorem, Ed. *Manipur: Past and Present*. Vol. I. Delhi: Mittal Publications. p.5.

⁵(1) Corresponds to Mesolithic or the Middle Stone Age. Zahid Hussain. (1991) Who are the Prehistoric Dwellers of the Meghalaya Plateau? In Singh and Sengupta. *Archaeology of Northeast India*. pp. 10-11. (2) Also known as *Bacsono-Hoabinhian*. G.E. Hall. (1987). *A History of South-East Asia*. London: Macmillan Education. p. 6.

at Nongpok Keithelmanbi⁶ and Napachik⁷, and in the cave of Tharon⁸. O.K. Singh believes that the culture had flourished between 5,000 and 6,000 BP (before present). Interestingly, similar cultural strata have been reported from the Tam-pra Minor cave in North Thailand and the Gua Cha caves in Kelantan province in present-day Malaysia. The similarities are glaring in regards to edged ground pebble tools that were commonly found throughout Southeast Asia, particularly those of the Spirit Cave of Thailand and the Niah Caves of Borneo. Geldern also establishes commonality of the use of Neolithic oval-axe amongst those in northern Burma, Naga Hills, Cambodia and the eastern islands of the Archipelago.

Based on the above findings, it has been construed that the Hoabinhian culture had spread in a continuous chain stretching from Indonesia to Manipur and passing through the Malay Peninsula, Vietnam, Thailand, and Myanmar. About the racial affinity of the people, E.D. Hall believes that those people were composed of dark skinned-race of small stature and of the Australoid-Veddoid type, an appellation that was derived from the Vedda tribes of Ceylon. Fitted into this classification are the Senoi and Sekai hill tribes of Malay peninsula, and other backward people of the south Celebes and Engano and Mentawai Islands on the west coast of Sumatra.⁹

3. Neolithic (New stone age)

The Neolithic culture in Manipur is represented by archaeological findings at Phunan, Napachik, Laimanai and Nongpok Keithelmanbi. O.K. Singh observes that it was characterised by stone tools consisting of chisels, hoe-blade, triangular axe, quadrangular axe and adze, and pottery. The tools mostly made by grinding and polishing technique; chipping, sawing and pecking techniques were also evident. The findings could be compared

⁶About 15 km. northeast of Yairipok, on the bank of Thoubal River.

⁷A small hillock near Meitei village Wangu.

⁸In Tamenglong District.

⁹Hall. *A History of South-East Asia*. p.6.

with those of Southeast Asia with one peculiarity of inclusion of a tiny variety of neoliths in the findings in Manipur.

Based on the pottery types found at Phunan, Napachik, Laimanai, and Nongpok Keithelmanbi, O.K. Singh classifies the Neolithic culture in Manipur into three, namely; (1) Corded ware culture, (2) Tripod ware culture, and (3) Geometric ware culture. He believes that similar three sequential phases were found in southern China, where from around 1500 to 700 BCE, was the late Neolithic culture represented by the geometric ware horizon.

The discovery of Jadeite tools in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland would suggest that Chinese Neolithic culture had spread out across what today constitutes the Indo-China-Myanmar border regions. An important feature of this cultural sequence is the use of shouldered and rectangular axes. Geldern identifies the shouldered axe with the culture of Mon-Khmer people and argues that the Neolithic people who brought the rectangular axe culture had diffused the Austronesian language. However, this theory is challenged by Van Heekeren for want of archaeological confirmation.

II. RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC GROUPS

1. Austro-Mongoloids

People of the Mongoloid origin, mostly from southern China, eastern Tibet and other Oceanic Tribes including the Australoids¹⁰

¹⁰Chatterji categorizes two groups of Austric Language: (1) Austro-Asiatic, e.g., speeches of India like Santali, Mundari, Ho, Korku, Savara, Gadaba, Nicobarese (Nicobar Island), Khasi (Meghalaya); Paloung and Wa (Burma); Mon or Tailang (South Burma & South Siam); Khmer (Cambodia); Cham (Cochin China); Stieng, Bahnar and others (Indo-China); and Sakai & Semang (Malaya); (2) Austronesian, e.g., (a) Indonesian-Malay, Japanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese, Sassak, Celebes speeches, Tagalong and Visayan and other Philippine speeches, and Malagasy (Madagascar); (b) Melanesian like Solomon Island, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, and Viti or Fiji; and (c) Polynesian-Samoan, Tongan, Tahitian, Tuamotuan, Marquesan, Maori (New Zealand), and Hawaiian. Suniti Kumar Chatterji. (1950). Kirata

had undergone through intercourses. It appears that the Mongoloid migrants had either displaced or absorbed the pre-existing Australoids beyond recognition, though some traces of the Australoid strains are to be seen even to-day in culture and physical appearance. This view is based on migration theory that suggests that during the Lungshan stage, the upper level of which has been dated to the middle of second millennium BCE, there was a significant population increase of the Mongoloids inhabiting northern China. It led to migration towards southern China and beyond, going as far as Indonesia where they intermingled with the pre-existing Australoids. In northern Vietnam, the migrant Mongoloids mingled with the Australo-Negroids and became the southern Mongoloids. Some of these people after merging changed direction and emigrated towards different routes. In the process, many of them further intermingled with other people of the Mongoloid origin.

The blending of the Australoid and Mongoloids, according to Chatterji, had resulted in the evolution of the ancient Rmen (Rman) or Mon people of the central and southern Burma, Paloungs and Was of the Upper Burma, as well as the Khmers, Chams, Siteng, Bahner and other Austric or Austro-Asiatic speakers of Siam and Indo-China.¹¹ In short, the people of the Tibeto-Burman, the Chinese-Siamese and the Australoid origins had blended to become the Cambodians, Siamese, Burmese, Vietnamese, and Indonesians of the contemporary period. Historians have coined different names for these people, such as the Palea-Mongoloid, Austro-Mongoloid, Austro-Asiatic, Pareoean (Southern Mongoloid) and those spread into the East Indian Archipelago as the Oceanic Mongols or Proto-Malay, and so on. From a linguistic point of view, the Austro-Mongoloid tribes spoke Mon-Khmer-Malacca-Munda-Nicobar-Khasi languages. For classification, Peter Schmidt classifies them under a generic term known as the Austro-Asiatic. According to him,

Jana Kirti. In *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Letters, XVI: 2. p.150.

¹¹ Chatterji. 'Kirata Jana Kirti.' p. 158.

these different forms of speech were mutually related, and their speakers possessed similar physical type.

Austro-Mongoloid Connection: The Australoids appeared to have migrated to Northeast India at a very early time before the migration of the Mongoloids. However, the latter had either partially or entirely absorbed the strains of the former. According to T.C. Sharma, the early Mongoloid migrants into Northeast India might have mixed up with the aboriginal Proto-Australoid inhabitants, and thus certain strains of the physical characteristics of the latter might have continued to exist.¹² According to B.M. Das, the old *Lolichocephalic platyrrhine* (Pre-Dravidian) type, was present amongst the Kukis, Khasis, Manipuris, Kachari, *etc.*¹³ However, he contemplated that the tribes were Indo-Mongoloids.

B.M. Das believes that the Mro of Chittagong hills was an old Australoid pocket. According to him, certain Austric words were incorporated in the dialect of the Wancho tribe of Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh. Certain semblances of the Australoid ethnic elements were also apparent in their physical features. He argued for the possibility of the Australoid elements in the physical characteristics amongst the Khasi people in Meghalaya. Guha and Basu studied the distribution of cornea types amongst Naga tribes and identified two racial types, which were termed as Group II and I. The latter was composed of Australoids.

From the above views, it can be safely concluded that some Australoid blood might have been absorbed amongst the Manipuris during the pre-historical and proto-historical periods. The possibility of the fusion of the Australoid elements with that of the Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese cannot be ruled out.

¹²B.M. Das. (1998). Some Aspects of Physical Anthropology of the Tribes of Northeast India. In Sebastien Karotemprel. Ed. *The Tribes of Northeast India*. Shillong: Centre for Indigenous Cultures.p. 10.

¹³ B.M. Das. (1987). *The Peoples of Assam*. Delhi: Gian Publishing House. p. 30.

a. Mon

The original homeland of the Mons¹⁴ is considered to be in Central China. This view is refuted by scholars who believed that they were initially from the southern lower Himalayas. Some scholars link the beginning of the history of Burma with the arrival of the Mons from Central Asia between 2500 and 1500 BCE. Others claim that the aboriginal people who were settled at the delta of the Irrawaddy River were known as the Mon or Taliang whereas the Khmer inhabited present-day Cambodia, the adjoining parts of Siam, and the south of Cochin-China. Hoddan suggested that the Khmer or Cambodian were the hybrids of the Kuis, Malays, and Hindus possessing identifying characteristics such as hair that was often wavy and rarely oblique eyes. At present, the Mons inhabit Cambodia, the adjoining parts of Siam, and the south of Cochin- China. However, their habitation was more extensive in the past. Two centuries ago, before the arrival of the Annamese, they occupied the whole of Cochin China (Nambo).

b. Khmer

The Khmers were ethnically related to the Mons of the Lower Myanmar. They supplanted the Funanese (Nokor Phnomese) supremacy. It is not sure whether they were altogether a new *ethnie* or latecomers of the same stock to which the Funanese belonged. Their ancestral home is believed to be either southwest China or northeast India. The route chart of the Mon-Khmer migration suggested that they followed the route towards the Mekong (Mee-Khwong) valley and further towards the south into Kampuchea and Thailand until they reached Burma. From there some of them went further westward up to the Bay of Bengal and then turned towards the north. It is believed that the Khasis are the

¹⁴(1) *Mons*, according to Csomo de Koros, are hill people between India and Tibet; *Mon-Pa* means Mon people. Padmeswar Gogoi. (1999). *The Tai and The Tai Kingdom*. Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall. p. 141. (2) Mon or Talieng language is the vernacular language of Pegu: R.G. Latham. (1985). *Ethnology of Asia, Africa & Europe*. Delhi: Gian Publishing House. p. 207.

remnants of the Mon-Khmer. Linguistically, the Mon-Khmer language is closely connected to several dialects spoken in the Burma-China frontier regions, such as Palaung, Wa, and others. It is also connected to the dialects of certain tribes of the Malacca, Nicobarese, Khasis of Meghalaya, and Munda of Central India. At present, the Mon-Khmers are confined in the coastal areas of Pegu and a few mountain tracts in Assam and Burma.

Mon-Khmer Connection: The Mon-Khmer belonged to Austro-Asiatic race. It is likely that some sections of the Mon-Khmer due to civil wars, strife and diseases like cholera epidemic—moved north-west and finally arrived at Manipur. It is most likely that some sections of the Funans, Marings, and Siam-mi moved north and entered Imphal valley from the east, while some other sections of the Mon-Khmer, Funan and Siam-mi too moved by the western route and arrived at the western part of Manipur. They were, according to Ibohal Singh, subjected to the pressure largely from the Tibeto-Burman immigrants such as the Kabuis, Marams, Thongnangs, Mayangs, and others.¹⁵ He believes that in the Barail ranges of the North Cachar hills there were caves, fortifications, and villages of vanquished people called the *Siemi*.¹⁶ It is believed that Cachari kings had vanquished the *Siemis* in those caves, indicating that the people of *Siam* had once occupied the north-western parts of Manipur and the adjoining areas of North Cachar Hills. Afterwards, a significant chunk of the Funan-Maring settled at Imphal valley. They merged with others, and many of them absorbed into the Meitei's fold.

Archaeological and historical evidence substantiated the presence of the Mon-Khmer and Tai elements in Manipur. The findings from Tharon cave, Napachik, *etc.* suggested for the existence of the Mon-Khmer speaking Australoid-Mongoloid people in Manipur, who might have migrated to this land before the advent of the Tibeto-Burman speakers. Inundation of some

¹⁵Kacha Naga, scheduled tribes, inhabiting western hills bordering Cachar (Assam), included in Zelianglong fold.

¹⁶*Siemi*, derived from combination of *Siem* (Khmer word for *Siam*) and *mi* (Tibeto-Burman word for man or people), means people of *Siam*.

unspecified Austric people in other parts of the Imphal valley is also suggested by the names attributed to places.¹⁷ Chatterji observes that traits such as common clubhouse and betel-chewing might have been adopted from the Austric people. All these, taken with some aspects of megalithic culture, in particular, that of the Kacha Naga of the north-west Manipur and the North Cachar Hills, with traditions, customs and legends strongly suggest matrilineal intercourses.

Hutton observes that the Kukis were no doubt related to the Kachins by origin though they have absorbed many foreign elements, probably including the Shan, Mon-Khmer, and Negrito. He further asserts that many Thadou customs were suggestive of the Khasis and Hos, both of the Indonesian affinity, and anyhow we may be sure that there was no lack of actual contact with the races of Burma. The Thadou custom of burying the dead in what must be a troublesome excavation leading out of a simple pit grave reappears in the Sumatra and Philippine Islands, where the Tinguin and Mandaya follow it and also share the same tradition.

c. Indonesian

The ancestors of the Indonesians had once lived at Yunan about 1500 BCE. They crossed over the Indonesian archipelago after a trek through the Indo-China and Malaya that lasted 1500 years.

¹⁷(1) Places like *Kha-Jiri* and *Awang Jiri* (Manipur) are believed to be Austric formation, like *Loi-Jiri* hills (Northern Burma), *Jiri* and *Jiri River* (Manipur west). Wahengbam Ibohal Singh. (1962). *The History of Manipur*. Imphal. pp. 129-130. (2) A Chutiya friend suggested *Jiri* or *Siri* meant flowing or running water, i.e., a river; the name "Jiribam" therefore implies it as a place lying near river. Chutiyas are related to Mon-Khmer people. In Upper Assam names of places like *Dibrugarh*, *Digboi*, *Dimapur*, *Diphu*, and names of rivers like *Di-khu*, *Di-hong*, *Di-yang*, and *Di-soi* are suggestive of mixed formation of Bodo and Austric words. Wahengbam Ibohal Singh. (1962). *The History of Manipur*. Imphal. p. 131. (3) Name of places with the suffix *long* are possibly associated with Funan-Mon-Khmer Tais. In Manipur, they were possibly settled at *Sibi-long*, *Oinam-long*, *Kambi-long*, and *Phe-long*. *Ibid.* p. 134.

Hendrik Kern, on the basis of the linguistic study, claims the regions of the Champa, Cochin-China, and Cambodia could be the birthplace of their culture. Geldern traces their original home to western China where the great rivers of East and Southeast Asia had originated. According to Hall, the tremendous pre-historic migrations came to an end when the Indian culture began to exert influence. However, the Indonesians who had established there, in the Neolithic times, formed the basis of the populations. They were of two kinds: first, those who had preserved to some extent purity of race, such as the Batacks of Sumatra, Dyaks of Borneo, and Alfurs of Celebes and Moluccas; and, second, the Malays of coasts, of many varieties and mixtures, Malays of Sumatra, Sudanese, Javanese, Madurese and Balinese people who were impregnated more or less with the Austro-Asiatic culture. The principal indigenous *ethnie* of the archipelago include the Javanese and Sundanese in Java; the Bataks, Achinese, and Menangkabus in Sumatra; the Balinese in Bali; the Madurese in Madura; the Dyaks in Kalimantan; the Papuans in West Irian, and; the Menadonese and Bugis in Sulawesi. Hence, it would be proper to refer to these group as the Australoids or Austronesians.

Indonesian Connection: It is stated that the Tibeto-Burman had settled at an island or near the seashore or at least might have seen the sea on their way to Southeast Asia before they changed their direction and entered North-eastern India. There, some of them could have inter-mingled with original settlers to become the Paleo-Mongoloid.¹⁸ On their way to Southeast Asia, some members of the first group changed their direction and moved westward to enter into different parts of Northeast India. All these populations scattered themselves in different parts of Northeast India and came to be known by various names, such as the Bodo, Naga, Kuki, Meitei, Tiwa, *etc.* J.N. Choudhury states that the Paleo-Mongoloid humanity have distributed as far as Indonesia

¹⁸Paleo-Mongoloids are possibly mixed-race comprising Indo-Chinese and Astro-Asiatic; they have cheek bones that are prominent but not as high as Indo-Chinese nor as short-headed as the latter. Choudhury. *'Pre-Historic and Early Tribal Migrations in North-East India.'* p. 99.

and beyond and that it should not be surprising to notice the racial resemblance between the Nishi (Dalfa) of Arunachal Pradesh and the Dayak of Borneo or between the Aka of Arunachal and the Akha living in northern Laos, adjacent to Burma, Thailand, and China. There is even similarity between the longhouses of stilts of the Nishi and the Mishmi of Arunachal and the far-away Dayaks of Borneo.

During their westward migration, they lost their Australoid appearance but retained some of the culture, custom, and habit of the people they had mixed with. The Indonesian origin of some of the tribes of Manipur is also propounded by Deniker. He suggests that the Nagas of Manipur and the Naga Hills [Nagaland State] were Indonesians, more or less pure, both in physical type and manners and customs.¹⁹ Shimray asserts that the Nagas were very much akin to the Dyaks and the Kayans of Borneo and the Sarawak (now Indonesia and Malaysia, respectively), the Battacks of Sumatra, the Igorots of Philippines, the Kal-Mon-Annam of Indonesia and certain groups of Formosa. These can be seen from the lifestyle and ornaments in many Naga villages. For instance, the Nagas are fond of cowrie shells for ornamentation of dress and conch shells as ornaments (precious ornament for them). They have many costumes and ways of life very similar to those followed by the ethnic groups living in the remote parts of Borneo, Sarawak, Indonesia, Malaysia. It indicates that their ancient abode was once near the sea, if not on some island. It is believed that the Nagas, while passing through the mainland and the Irrawaddy and Chindwin valley in the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic age had gradually moved up and finally settled at Hsawn-Isup, now Thangduat in Burma (pronounced as Samshok in the Tangkhul Naga dialect). From this place, they finally moved to the places they are occupying today.

¹⁹J. Deniker. (1988). *The Races of Man*. Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 395.

2. Tibeto-Burman

The original homeland of the speakers of the Tibeto-Burman language is considered to be the upper courses of the Yangtse Kiang and Hoang-ho Rivers in northwest China. Linguistically, most of the aboriginals who had inhabited this region before the advent of the Chinese were the Tibeto-Burman²⁰ branch of the Sino-Tibetan linguistic group. Perhaps, the Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Chinese) language, is divided into two branches, namely, (1) the Tibeto-Burman, and (2) the Chinese-Siamese. The Tibeto-Burman branch is further classified into sub-branches, such as; (a) the Bodo-Naga, (b) the Meitei-Kuki-Chin, (c) the Lolo-Kachin, (d) the Singpho, (e) the Mranma (Old Burmese), (f) the Myanma (Modern Burmese) and the numerous sub-divisions related to them. The Tibeto-Burmans who came down to Burma in succeeding waves settled in the Brahmaputra (Ti-Lao) valley and the adjoining regions and became the ancestors of certain sections of the Manipuris, Bodos and Nagas. Some remained in Burma and became the ancestors of the Kachins or Singhpos and the Lolos. The primitive Kuki or Chin people (Manipuris or Meiteis being an important group among them) were settled in the south-east of Assam and Burma, and Mran-ma (Myanma or Bramma), that is, Burmese proper. They had partly infiltrated into the Chittagong hill tracks through Arakan. All these groups are being classed as the Assam-Burma section²¹ of the Tibeto-Burmans, by some common points of linguistic and cultural resemblance amongst them.

a. Bodo-Naga

The Bodos are one of the most important groups of the Indo-Mongoloid people who are being described as the inhabitants of

²⁰Those more Asiatic than Tibetans and Himalayans; those more Tibetan or Himalayan are neo-Tibetans; those more Tai than Tibetan or Asiatic are either neo-Burmese and Shan-Burmans in specific cases.

²¹Other Tibeto-Burman groups are (a) Tibetan (b) Himalayan (c) North-Assam. Chatterji. 'Kirata Jana Kirti.' p. 160.

the country lying to the north of the Himalayas and the western belt of China. This country is known as *Bod*. The inhabitants *Bod* are known as *Bodo Phicha*, *Bodo cha* or *Bodosa*. The word *Bod* is supposed to mean land or country and *Cha* is to mean son or children. In another interpretation, the term *Bodo* or *Boro* seems to have been derived from the Tibetan word *bod* or *pot* meaning *land of snow*, thereby suggesting the Himalayan region. Thus, the Bodos migrated initially from the northern highlands into the plains of the great rivers of India. They are originally to be the eastern Himalayan Tibeto-Burman people who migrated towards the south-west of the Brahmaputra valley. It includes the Cacharis, Lalungs, Dimachas, Garos, Rabhas, Chutiyas, Marans, Meches, Hajangs (Hajongs), Tipras (Tripuris), Deoris, *etc.* At one point of time, Bodo people extended their sway over the west of Manipur, the Naga hills, the whole of Northeast India excepting only the Khasi and the Jaintia hills.

Linguistically the Bodos and Nagas²² have a close affinity. Grierson divides the composition of languages spoken in the then districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Naga Hills, Cachar, Nagong; Manipur and the countries to the east of the then British India, into five sub-groups. According to him some groups amongst the people of Manipur were related to the Naga-Bodo sub-group comprising the Mikir, Kacha-Naga, Kabui, and Khoirao. The Naga-Kuki sub-group consists of the Sopvoma or Mao, Maram, Miyangkhang, Kwoireng (Koireng) or Liyang, Luhuppa or Luppa, Maring. The western, eastern and central sub-groups were related to the Nagas and other areas. The western Naga group of languages like the Angami, Sema, Rengma, and Kezhama were bounded on the south by the Kuki, and on the west and on the north (so far as it concerns Tibeto-Burman languages) by the Bodo group. In each area, there is a transitional linguistic area. That is to say, between Angami Naga and Bodo languages there is a group, which Grierson calls Naga-Bodo group.

²²Naga Tribes are Ao, Sema, Konyak, Angami, Lotha, Chakeshang, Chang, Khiemungam, Phom, Sangtam, Yimchungre, Rengma, *etc.*

Bodo-Naga connection: Linguistic evidence shows that at one time the Bodo people had extended over the whole region of Northeast India, except the Khasi and Jaintia hills. The Bodos and Nagas are sub-branches of the Tibeto-Burman group of people who had taken the north and north-western route from their place of dispersal at the tri-junction of Tibet, China, and Burma towards the Brahmaputra Valley. There is every reason to indicate that some sections of the Bodo-Naga linguistic group of people from the Brahmaputra valley migrated towards Manipur and Nagaland following the up-streams of the tributaries of the Brahmaputra River. According to Ibohal Singh, the Mangangs that constituted a significant section amongst the Meiteis contained Bodo elements. He believes that the Bodo and some section of the Tibeto-Burman people with strong Bodo elements formed the Mayangs in its original form.²³

The Bodo custom and cultural resemblances are prevalent among some sections of the Manipuris. For instance, the Bodos maintain a place of worship, called *Ishing*, in the inner room of the house. The Bodos call their principal deities *Bathou Borai* (God) and *Bathou Buroi* (Goddess of Wealth). An altar is prepared with earth at the place of worship, and morsels of food are placed as offering to god and goddess. Just near the altar of *Ishing*, an earthen jar is kept with two pieces of stone representing *Bathou Borai* and *Bathou Buroi* or *Maino*. This practice finds similarities to the worship of *Sanamahi* and *Leimaren* amongst the Meiteis and Kabuis. During festivals, ceremonies, and rituals, the Bodos offer *jumai* to gods and goddesses. It is essential for the *Ojajs* or medicine-men of the Bodos. The Bodo's process of brewing rice beer called *jao* or *jaomai*²⁴, and its functional role in society

²³Mayangs (Bodo origin like Tripuris, Kacharies and Dimasas); one of the earliest settlers from Bengal, established a principality at Lamangdong (Bishnupur). Its cognate tribe Thongnang entered Manipur from western hills and absorbed into Meitei.

²⁴Bodos treat guest with a cup of *jumai* or *jau*, they are happy to entertain guests with *jumai* and a piece of pork (Omabedor). Dr. Kameswar Brahma. (1998). *A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Boros*. Gossangaon Assam: Chiranjib Brahma. p. 8

appeared quite similar to the pre-Hindu Meitei and the pre-Christian tribal societies of Manipur. The commonality is also found in the wearing of clothes; such as women wearing *phanek*, wrapped around from the upper portion of the chest up to the lower portion of knee and men wearing *khudei* (shortened *pheijom* or *dhoti*) from waist up-to knee level. A group of people known as the Mayang-Thongnang mentioned in the history of Manipur were none other than the Bodos and their sub-groups such as the Dimasas, Cacharis and Tripuris.

b. Karen

The Karens belong to the Tibeto-Burman group. Lehman states that certain words amongst the Karens and Chins which had unknown provenance might have possibly belonged to the archaic Tibeto-Burman stratum since the Karen is pretty well established as a relatively distinct branch within the Tibeto-Burman group. It, however, cannot be denied that the Karens had close connections with the Shans and affinities with the Mon-Khmer people. Chronologically, the ancestors of the Karens were inhabitants of China. The Karens, who inhabited the upper valley of Me Ping and the mountainous districts of Arakan, Pegu, and Tennasserm, the country between Sittong and Salwen (Red Karens), probably came into Burma at a later date than the Mons. Lacouperie states that around 778 CE, the Karens, numbering some 200,000 families were expelled from China via Yungtchang (eastern China) by the powerful king of Nanchou (Nan-Chao) when he destroyed the western part of Tsuan state (in Kuangsi/Kuang Xi). They are still represented in China (Kwetchou Province) by the Kihloo or Kihtou tribes, whose grammar and vocabulary resemble those of the Karens in Burma. Burmese chronicles recorded the migration of the *Tarops* and the *Tarets* from the Sien in *Gandhala* {Buddhist called it *Yunan (Gandhara)*} into Burma. According to P. Gogoi, the Tarets were the Karens, the people of ancient Teru state in China. He believes that in the early period they were

referred to by the Burmese as *Taroks* or Shan *Taroks*²⁵ and in the later period as Shans. The second invasion of Burma by the Shan-*Tayoks* (*Tarops*) from Yunan took place at about 241 CE.

Karen connection: The *Tek* people, also known as *Tih*, were the indirect ancestors of the Karens. The Karens constituted the primitive nucleus of the *Teru* or *Tsu*, which became a powerful state of southern China during the reign of the Tchou (Zhou) dynasty (1027-221 BCE). We also hear of them towards the end of the Shang-Yu (Xiang Yu) dynasty in the south-east of Shenshi Province about 1276 BCE. *Kiptchak* is one of their (*Tek*'s) subdivisions. Lehman suggested the possibility of a close relationship of the Chin and the *Sak-Kadu* (*Thet*) languages with that of the Karen. The *Sak-Kadu* (*Thet*) people were again dispersed from the Irrawaddy valley due to the presence of the Chin. "More likely the split between the *Sak* of the Irrawaddy Valley in Burma and the related *Andro-Sengmai* of Manipur may have resulted from the subsequent northward movement of the Chin into the Chinwin."²⁶ Grierson also asserts that the *Sak* or *Lui* (*Loi*) languages were spoken in Manipur and in the adjoining Burma Districts of Myitkyina, Katha and Upper Chindwin region. The *Andro* and *Sekmai* (in Manipur) dialects are closely related to the *Kadu* spoken in the districts mentioned above of Burma.²⁷

In the meanwhile, the Chins, who are closely connected with the genealogy of the people of Manipur, are said to have the same parentage with the Karens. According to Hallett, the Yuns or Karens are a conglomeration of tribes speaking dialects of the

²⁵Shan original kingdoms in Irrawaddy valley; some years previous to the building of old Pagan (523 BCE), Burmese were driven southwards by Chinese from upper valley of Irrawaddy; Shans of Yunan are called by Burmese as Shan-Tayoks or Chinese-Shans: Holt S. Hallett, M.T.C.E. (1985 Imprint). *An Historical Sketch of the Shans*. In A.R. Colquhoun. Ed. *Amongst the Shans*. Delhi: Manas Publications. p. 331.

²⁶K. Lehman. (1978 Imprint). *The Structure of Chin Society*. Aizawl: Firma KLM Private Ltd., on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Government of Mizoram. p. 20.

²⁷George Abraham Grierson. (1973 Imprint). *Linguistic Survey of India*. Vol. I, Part. II. Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Das. p. 27.

same linguistic branch. The reason that the appellation *Karen* or *Kayen* have not been attributed to them might have resulted from their settlement in the kingdom of the Tchen-Tching and parts of the Tchen-la when the Shans conquered the later in 707 CE. The *Tchen* is the exact equivalent in phoneme of the Burmese term *Khyen*, which is attributed to the Karens on the west of upper Burma and the Pwo tribe of the Karens. Vumson also suggested that the *Sak* kingdom might have been the *Zo* of upper Burma. The evidence above indicated that the Karens, Chins, *Sak-Kadu-Thet* and Chakpas of Manipur are closely connected.

c. Chin

Historians have different opinions about the origin of the Chins. Yule in 1855 described the Chins and the Lushais as the Indo-Chinese related groups known as the Kukis, Nagas, and Lushais, and by many specific names. In 1866 Colonel Phayre and Mr McCabe also classified the Chins as the Indo-Chinese. Carey and Tuck state that the Burma Census Report of 1891 had dismissed the Chin ethnology with the remark that the Chins or Kyins were a group of hill tribes, all taking various dialects of the same Tibeto-Burman speech and calling themselves by various names. They continued that the Kukis of Manipur, the Lushais of the then Bengal and Assam, and the Chins who had initially lived in Tibet (now part of China) were of the same stock. Their form of government, a method of cultivation, manners, and customs, beliefs and traditions pointed to their common origin.²⁸

The term Chin is a Burmese word used to denote various hill tribes living in the country between Burma and erstwhile British provinces of Assam and Bengal. It is written and dialectically pronounced as *Khyang* (*Khyen*). About the term Chins, Grierson says, "*Chin is a Burmese word used to denote the various hill tribes living in the country between Burma and the provinces of Assam and Bengal. It is written and dialectically pronounced*

²⁸S. Carey Bertram and H.N. Tuck. (1987) *The Chin Hills*. Delhi: Gian Publishing House. p. 2.

Khyang.²⁹ Lehman states that the term *Chin* is imprecise. It is a Burmese word (*khyang*) and not a Chin word. On the other hand, there are different versions as to the origin of the word *Chin*. The *Chin* as a whole is known by different names amongst different linguistic groups, which coincide with their geographical locations, such as the *Sho* in the southern part of *Chin* state, the *Lai* in Central *Chin*, and the *Zemi* in Northern *Chin* region. Each of these generic names within the *Chin* contains several names. The northern *Chin* area includes the area lying between the northern part of the *Chin* State (Burma) stretching from the *Tedim* (*Tidim*) and extending to the north as far as the *Lamka* (*Churachandpur*) of south Manipur.

It is also suggested by some scholars that the word *Chin* came from the Burmese word *tage-chin*, which means dear friend. According to one version, the term *Chin* is a Burmese word derived from *Khyang*. It meant a basket in Burmese. *Khyang* is the Arakanese name for the *Zo* and is an old Burmese word for the *Chin*. When the British encountered people of the hill areas west of the *Kale Valley* (southern portion of *Kabo Valley*), the term *Chin* was adopted from the Burmese. Another version says that the term *Chin* was said to have derived from the Chinese word *jen*, meaning man. The *Chins* in *Burma* call the Chinese as *sen* as *Burmese* call them *jen*. When the *Shans* and *Mons* asked the identity of the *Chins* when they first met; the *Chins* answered that they were *jens*, but the former pronounced it *Chin*.

Chin connection: The *Kuki-Chin* people represent an important branch or section of the *Assam Indo-Mongoloids*. They have kin in *Burma* and appear to have settled in ancient times in *Manipur*, *Lushai Hills*, and the *Chittagong Hill Tracts*. According to *Chatterji*, the *Indo-Mongoloids* were known to *Assamese* and *Bengalis* as *Kukis*, and to *Burmese* as *Chins* (written *Khyin*), and *Kuki-Chin* has been adopted as a composite and inclusive name of them. The *Kukis* of *Manipur* are *Chins*. However, the *Chin* *ethnie*

²⁹George Abraham Grierson. (1987 Imprint). *Languages of North-Eastern India*. Vol. II. Delhi: Gian Publishing House. p. 510.

are very vast and numerous, that when they arrived at Manipur at different times and from different places, some of them had appeared comparatively different from one another. Hence, the appellation Kuki-Chin seems to be more appropriate to denote the entire people of the Chin origin. Linguistically, the Meiteis are closer to the Kuki-Chin people. According to Chatterji, the Meiteis were the most advanced section of the Kuki-Chin people. Grierson believes that the Meitei language fell into the general Tibeto-Burman group, but expressed some doubts as to the adequacy of the Kuki-Chin to delineate the sub-group to which that language belonged.

3. Chinese-Siamese

Chinese-Siamese is a branch of the Tibeto-Chinese (Sino-Tibetan) linguistic group of the Mongolian race. Siamese were the occupants of the lower part of the Menam River. The occupants of the Menam (Mae Nam) valley, as far as its course is known, were wholly the T'hay (Thai). It is on the alluvial soil of the delta of Menam that the *T'hay* civilisation had attained the highest development. Numerous people speaking different Thai dialects were the last arrivals in Indo-China. Their migrations might have commenced from the first century BCE when the Pa-y tribes came from Sechuen (Sichuan) into western Yunan to establish the kingdom of Luh-Tchao. It includes the Tai-Lai, Dai, Thai, Siamese, Khamti, Ahom, Shan, Lao, *etc.* Many of the groups and sub-groups of the people of Southeast Asia like the Tai,³⁰ Thai, Dai, Lai, Shan, and Mao-Shan, Ahom, *etc.* belong to this family. A considerable proportion of the Meitei population are the descendants of the Tai-Lai and the Mao-Shan branches. The migration of the Tais from their heavenly abodes (original land-believed to be Yunan in China) to their present settlement, that is, the land of *Mee* (believed to be Upper Burma and parts of

³⁰Tai known with different local appellations, e.g., Shan (Burma), Siamese (Thailand or Siam), Lao (French Indo-China) and Pai (Yunan), therefore obscuring the aboriginal common identity. Gogoi. *The Tai and The Tai Kingdom*. p. 1.

Southeast Asia including Manipur) is being allegorically inscribed as descending from the land of the *Lai* (gods) i.e. heaven, to the land of *Mee* (man).

a. Tai

It is important to know that the Tais considered themselves to be a heaven-born race as distinguished from the Mon-Tai races, whom they called *slaves*.³¹ Some scholars say that the generic name *Tai* meant glorious, corresponding to the Chinese word for celestial. Gogoi states that the word Tai was derived from the Chinese word *Ta* which meant *great*. Some scholars are of the view that *Tai* was a title conferred upon the Chinese General Sin-How by the Chinese Emperor Tuan-yok (2513-2435 BCE) for defeating a rebellious minister Kung-Kang and imposing duties upon the people who used the *Poon* or *Phen* River, that is, an old name of the Howang-Ho River.

In fact, *Tai* is a generic name denoting a branch of the Mongoloid population of Asia. The Tais are now mainly concentrated in the Indo-China peninsula (now Southeast Asia). Their origin could mostly be traced to the proto-historic and pre-historic periods in the provinces of Southern China, namely Szechien (Sichuan Szechuan), Kweichau (Guizhou) and Yunan.³² Their present habitation extends from Assam (India) in the west to Kwangsi (Guangxi) and Hainan Island (in the east and from the interior of Yunan in the north to the southernmost extremity of Thailand (Siam) in the south. They were known by different names at different places and periods. In Burma (Myanmar) they are known as the *Shan*; as the *Siamese* in Thailand (Siam); the *Indo-Chinese* by the French; the *Laos* in southern part of Indonesia; the *Dai* in the south-western part of Indonesia *Li* or *Lai*; the *Pai* in Yunan; the *Ahom* in Assam; and the *Kabo* or *Maitay Kabo* by Manipuris. The Tai people that came to Assam in

³¹*Ibid.* p. 125.

³²Yunan: poor southern districts [Province] of China; the meaning of its name is *cloudy south or south of the cloudy mountains*: W.A. P. Martin. (1907). *The Awakening of China*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. p. 52.

a later period came to be known by various local names, such as the *Hkamati*, *Hpake* or *Phakeal*, *Turung*, *Iton*, *Itonia*, *Hkamyang*, *Nora* and so on. But they still use *Tai* as a prefix to their group name to identify their origin, e.g., *Tai-Hkamati*, *Tai-Hpake*, *Tai-Turung*, etc. The emergence of the different appellations such as the *Tai*, *Thai*, *Dai*, *Li*, *Lai*, *Loi*, etc might be the result of different pronunciation by different people at different periods.

The early Tai migration might have occurred sometime around 3rd century BCE when China was ruled by Emperor Shi-wang-Ti or Shih-Hwang-Ti or Qin-Shi-Huang (249-210 BCE), the founder of the Chinese Empire. Shih-Wang-Ti exerted pressures upon the Tais of Hupeh and Hunan. He subsequently destroyed their kingdom, solidarity, and culture. He imposed labour upon them to construct the Great Wall of China. In 214 BCE, Shih-Hwang-Ti, to promote Taoism, issued orders to seize and destroy almost all the classical books, particularly those of Confucius, except the books on agriculture, medicine, and divining art. He buried four hundred and sixty men alive who practised the latter, probably because they had remonstrated with him. To evade oppression, the Tais undertook migration. They followed different river courses and entered; (1) Upper Burma through the valleys of Shweli, Nam-ting, and Taping, (2) Siam through Menam and Me-ping valleys; (3) French Indo-China through the Mekong, black and Red Rivers, and, settled down in the rice growing areas of those countries.

The expansion and consolidation of the Chinese empire during the time of the emperor Shih-Hwang-Ti in the 3rd century BCE and afterwards resulted into continuous emigration of the Tais and many other southern hill tribes of China towards the southern direction. Oppression severely affected the Ngai-Lao people, a branch of the Tai family, who were settled at the Lao-Shan Kiu-Lung (Chiu-Lung) range. After entering into upper Burma, it further splintered into smaller groups. An important section of these splintered groups entered Manipur and dispersed into different directions. They were absorbed into the pre-existing inhabitants and became the ancestors of certain sections of the population. In the mid-13th century, there was another wave of

migration of the Tais to upper Burma and the Menam valley of modern Thailand. It was caused by the advance of Kublai Khan (1260-1294 CE) with his Mongol hordes, right down to the heart of western Yunan.

Tai connection: The Lais are considered to be one of the Tai groups. As stated above, oppression under the regime of Shih-Hwang-Ti had affected Tai migration to the southern part of China. They took refuge in hills, and many of them merged with the hill tribes lying between Chin Hills and Burma. Twelve such tribes are mentioned as nine Lais and three Miaos. According to Ibohal Singh, the Tai tribes like the Ngai-lao, Shen-lao, Loi, Lai, Khunjan, Nung or Lungjen were important in the history of Manipur. The Ngai Lao legend of Ti Mong-tseuz³³ having nine sons,³⁴ each of whom become progenitors of different tribes, is almost the similar with the legend of king Kangba (Manipur) having nine sons who became progenitors of different lineages and communities of Northeast India. It is believed that amongst the people of Manipur, the main component of Ningthouja (Poirei-Wangam), many cognate groups such as Angoms, Khumans, Luwangs, and some section of the present communities in the hills are of the Tai origin.

b. Shan

The Shans, according to Burmese chronicles, were driven southward from the upper valley of the Irrawaddy by the eruption of the Chinese some years previous to the building of the Old Pagan (523 BCE). Most probably, the Shans of Yunan, who were

³³The Ngai-Lao (Nan-Chao) legend says that Ti Mong-Tseu had nine sons, who became the ancestors, respectively of (1) Tai-Yai (Shans), (2) Tibetans, (3) Chinese, (4) Man, (5) Ngai-Lao dynasty of Nan-Chao, (6) Ceylonese, (7) Annamites, (8) Pai-tseu kingdom of Yunan and (9) Pai-Yi of lower Yunan and Upper Laos: Gogoi. *The Tai and The Tai Kingdom*. p.44.

³⁴Father of the nine sons is: Temmu (by Ibohal Singh); Te-mou (by Chinese version of Ngai-Lao Legend); Ti Mong-Tse (by Ngai Lao version of legend). *Ibid.* pp. 42-44.

also known as *Shan-Tayoks* or Chinese Shans by the Burmese were already spreading down the valley of the Irrawaddy. The Shan chronicles, quoted by Ney Elias, mentioned that the towns of Mone were founded in 519 BCE, Theinni in 441 BCE, and Theebo in 423 BCE. This narrative collaborates with the Burmese version of the Shan expansion towards the south. According to Holt, the Shans entered the basins of the Shweli (Nam Mao) River, and after founding the kingdom of Mung Mau or Muang Mau, spread northwards, westwards, and southwards. They drove out the Burmese southwards and westwards and occupied the locality west of the Salween (Thanlwin/ Lu) River, which they have retained since. The Shan kingdoms rapidly increased in numbers, partly from conquest, partly as a result of the habit of placing relatives of the ruling chief as princes at outlying provinces, and partly from frequent splitting up into kingdoms through rebellions and wars of succession.

The first remarkable development of the Tai power, that of Mao Shans, in the valley of the Mekong (Mee-Khwong) and upper Burma took place in the 6th century CE, under the leadership of two Tai princes namely Hkun-long and Hkun-Lai. According to Mao-Shan and the Burmese Buddhist chronicles, the political history of the Mao-Shans begins with the descent of two heavenly princes, Hkun-Long and Hkun-Lai on the earth. In the course of colonising expedition Hkun-Long and Hkun-Lai finally arrived at the places called *Mong-Ri* and *Mong-Ran*. They selected suitable sites in a fertile valley near a hill and set up villages of their own with the co-operation of the aboriginals. They annexed vast tracts of territory in upper Burma driving out the pre-existing ruling dynasty of Indian (Indo-Mongoloid) origin, to the west and subsequently subjugated local tribes.

In 568 CE, Hkun-Long displaced Dhaja Raja's dynasty at Taguang³⁵ (Old Pagan) and installed his son Ai-Hkun-Long as the king. In 568 CE, the capitals of Mau dominations were the *Muang Kaing*, *MuangNyaung*, *MuangRi* (*Mongri*), and *Muang Ram*. Tai power became extensive to the extent that it covered almost the

³⁵ Gogoi. *The Tai and The Tai Kingdom*. p. 112.

whole of the Shweli valley down to the Irrawaddy valley. It was from this place that the Tais spread out to the north, west, and south-east. The whole expanse of the territory lying between the Mekong and Irrawaddy covering the present Shan states of Burma came under the control of the branch of Tai called Mao-Shan. In the 13th century, the Tais consolidated their power in Assam. Mao Shan under the leadership of prince Hso-Ka-Hpa (Sukapha)³⁶ crossed the Patkai, reached the upper Assam, conquered new countries and founded a powerful kingdom at *Mungdunshunkham*³⁷ (a country full of gardens of Gold) known as the Ahom kingdom. Another group of the Tai moved down towards the Irrawaddy and entered the western country which was followed by many inroads of the Tai migrations.

Shan Connection: The Manipuris referred to the Mao-Shan empire as Pong kingdom. The capital of Pong was called *Mong-Mao-Rong* by the Shans and Mogaung by the Burmese. According to Dr Gogoi, the terms Pong, Mong, Bong, and Wong appeared to be merely phonetic variants of the original word. George Scott says that the kingdom of the Mao-Shan was the same as the kingdoms of Hsen-Se Man-Se and Pong. Dr Gogoi believes, that in 707 CE the king of Manipur Naothingkhong (663-763 CE) was defeated by Thais and ruled upon for ten years. The reference is apparently to Ko-lo-feng's conquest of Upper Burma and Assam including Manipur in the 8th century CE as described in the T'ang history.³⁸ However, the Royal Chronicle of Manipur is silent about

³⁶Son of Phunchangkhang, king of Kingdao; a descendant of Khunlung.

³⁷Families and persons who accompanied Sukapha to Mungdun (now Assam) were: one Khunlak family, one Khuntang family, one Klangkhu family, one Klangsham family, one Manykum Thaomung, one Khenlung Rapak (Saikia), one Thao Masham (forefather of Deodhais) of the family of Laokhri (heavenly artist), and one Thaomung Mashai (forefather of Mahans) of Masham family: Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua. (1985). *Ahom Buranji*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p. 24.

³⁸Ko-lo-feng was but a Chinese corruption of the Tai name Khun-Lu-Fung or Khun-Luang-Fung (meaning *lord Lu the Glorious*). Gogoi. *The Tai and The Tai Kingdom*. p. 67.

the presumed conquest of Manipur by the king of the Nan-Chao³⁹ empire Ko-long-feng (Geluofeng).

On the contrary, the Royal Chronicle of Manipuri mentions the visit of Samlung, a younger brother of the Ahom king Sukapha, who stayed at *Pong Inghol* for ten years. According to Pemberton, in 777 CE the Pong king Murgnow died, and his eldest son Sookampha (Sukapha) succeeded to the throne. He dispatched his younger brother Samlongpha (Samlungpha) to subdue the countries lying to the east and the west of his kingdom. During his colonising campaign, he descended into Manipur valley near Moirang. His visit is also recorded in Manipur's Royal Chronicle as well as Shan chronicles though there is a discrepancy of about five hundred years.⁴⁰ Their stay for ten years might have had a great Mao Shan influence on the socio-cultural life of Manipur. Many followers of Sukanpha might have been absorbed amongst the Manipuris and *vice versa*.

In 1474 CE, the king of Manipur Meidingu Kiyamba (1467-1508 CE) and the king of Pong Soohoongkhum (known to the Manipuris as Pong Ningthou Khe khomba) carried out a joint military campaign in Kabo Valley (another Shan principality, a tributary to the Pong) and defeated the king of Khambat. The names by which this territory was known to Buchanan, who accompanied Colonel Symes, the author of *Embassy to the Court of Ava* in 1798 were *Mrelap Shan* or Shan tributary to Burma and *Kasi Shan* or the western portion of it tributary to *Kasis* or *Kathees* or *Cassayers* (different names for Manipur). The Tai (Shan) inhabitants of Kubo/Kabo (those areas dominated by Meiteis) came to be known as *Mitai Kubo* or *Meitei Kabo*. According to Gogoi, *Tai-long* or *Great Tai* were called *Mitai Kabaw* (Kubo) by the people of *Cussay* (Manipur). Gangmumei also asserts that the inhabitants of the Kabo valley in the early nineteenth century were mostly the Shans, Manipuris, Burmese

³⁹Tai empire in Yunan was known as Nan-Chao Empire; also known as Tarops and Tarets by Burmese or Chinese Shans.

⁴⁰Capt. R. Boileau Pemberton. (1991 imprint). *Report on The Eastern frontier of British India*. Guwahati: Historical and Antiquarian Studies. pp. 113-114.

and other tribes of the Kuki-Chin origin. During the reign of Meidingu Ningthoukhomba (1432-1467 CE) several Kabo Shans migrated and settled in Manipur by marrying Manipuri women and absorbed them in the Meitei fold. Again, during the reign of Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1662 CE) there was a migration of Shans from the Kabo valley to Manipur, and they were also absorbed into the social fold of the Meiteis. Many of them were also employed in the service of the State. Perhaps, a considerable chunk of the Manipuri population is composed of the Shan (Chinese-Siamese) origin, though they may have different local names elsewhere.

c. Lai

Historically, the *Lai* as a community of people was related to both the Chinese-Siamese and the Tibeto-Burman linguistic branches of the Sino-Tibetan family. It is believed that *Lai* was the other name of Tai at different parts of South-east Asia. In the south and south-western part of Indonesia, the Tais are known as the *Dai*, *Li* or *Lai*. Gogoi believes that the *Li*, *Lai*, or *Loi* were but other forms of the *Day* and *Dai*. Bons d'Anty believes that the *Li*, the inhabitants of the interior of Hainan were pure Tai. Gogoi asserts that in many cases the phoneme *da* in Ahom became *la* in Shan. For instance, Ahom *Dai* (thread), *doi* (mountain or hill), *den* (moon), *dao* (star) became *lai*, *loi*, *lun*, and *law* in Shan respectively. Many, belonging to the Chin *ethnie* are also known as *Lai*. *Laimi* is used by the *Lais* in Haka areas, in Falam and parts of Matupi. The Zo people at Haka, Falam, and parts of Matupi were known as *Laimi*. In the Zo language, *Lai* means centre.

The *Lai* people believed that they were superior to all other Zo people because of their position at the centre of the universe. In the south Falam and the northern Hakka areas, the people called themselves *Lai*. The *Lais* could not accept identifying themselves with the *Zos* as they felt the latter were uncultured and uncivilised.

Vumson argues, that the Pawi⁴¹ did not identify themselves as Pawi but as *Lai*. The *Hakas*, *Klangklangs*, *Yokwas*, *Thettas*, and *Kapis* claimed that they belonged to the *Lai* group of people. The first two identified themselves with the *Lais*, but they refused to acknowledge the rest as belonging to their own race.

Lai Connection: In the context of Manipur the term *Lai* can be interpreted in two ways, namely; (1) *Lai* in the sense of god, and (2) people of *Lai* (a section of *Tai*) origin. First, in contemporary Meitei parlance, the term *Lai* denotes god. The meaning associated with the term seems to have been derived from the concept of god prevalent amongst Hindus at a later period, probably after the conversion of the Meiteis into Hinduism. However, *Lai*, as discussed above had a different *anthropomorphic* and historical meanings. Formerly, the Manipuris practiced *Apokpa Latpa* (ancestor worshipping). Many of their ancestors were believed to be of the *Lai* origin. Over the years, the meaning of *Lai* got profound changes. Gradually *Lai* was attributed with a sacrosanct divinity status and fused into conflation with the spiritual essence of Hindu gods and goddesses. The dead or departed souls came to be known as *Lai-oikhraba* (those who became *lai* or god). It seems that, under the influence of Hinduism, they had replaced the anthropomorphic and historical meanings of *Lai* for their ancestors with those of more mystified and deified cum spiritualised concepts based on Hindu concept of gods and goddesses.

Second, many in Manipur considered that they originated from *Lei-khun* or *Lai-khun*, that is, literally the village or land of *Lai*. It could be either a hole or cave or a place in a subterranean region through which they had emerged. The theory of the origin from

⁴¹Pawi is a name given to a group of Zo people by Paite and Lusei; they knotted hairs on top above foreheads. Pawis migrated from the plains of Shan country to Hmunli and thence to Lailun near Sunthla, a village between Falam and Haka (Halka): Vumson. (1986). *Zo History*. Aizawl: Published by the author. p. 48.

*Khun*⁴² is shared amongst the cognate communities as well. The Meiteis who worshipped *Thangjing*, *Marjing Wangbren*, *Koubru*, *Loyalakpa*, and *Nongpok Ningthou* regarded them as *Lai*, that is, divine god. It is not sure if in the beginning they were being worshipped either because of their *Lai* origin or because of the subsequent attribution of divinity. The first historical king Nongda Lairen Pakhangba is referred to as ‘half god’ (*Lai*) and ‘half man’. Historians will find it difficult to regard him as a god who was descended from heaven to exercise temporal rule on the ground. The iconography of ‘half god’ and ‘half man’ attributed to his personage could be regarded as an allegorical presentation of his ethnic blending of the Chinese-Siamese and the Tibeto-Burman. Alternatively, it could mean that the attribution was created in due recognition of his personage as a person of the *Lai* (*Tai-Lai*) origin who was enthroned to kingship by the people of the Mee (Tibeto-Burman) origin.

Some archaic texts and books periodise human existence in Manipur into two, namely (1) the *age of Lai* (god), and (2) the *age of Mee* (man). It is uncertain if the periodisation indeed corresponds to the two succeeding periods respectively ruled by the people of predominantly Chinese-Siamese origin (*Tai-Lai*) and the people of predominantly Tibeto-Burman (*Mee*) origin. If one would identify *Lai* with the Lai people, it can be theorised that the Lais had initially settled in the Koubru hills, as described in the traditional songs as *Laiyam Khunda Ahanba* (a foremost place inhabited by the gods). According to Suresh, the names of the first Lai chiefs were; (1) *Kourenng-Ngeng* in Koubru hills, (2) *Khak-Lenchifor Thangjing*, (3) *Wang-hu-kup* for *Wangbren*, and (4) *Maram-Ching-Hu-Kup* for *Marjing*. Those names were *Lai-ming* (name of Lai people). An aged old folk song mentions *Laina Koina Pangakpa* (Lai people protecting the land). It could mean that Lais were initially settled in the surrounding hills when they had not been settled in the valley. *Lai* people subsequently lost

⁴²*Khun* means village in present Manipuri vocabulary; areas of military control in Chinese: Marcel Granet. (1930). *Chinese Civilization*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. p. 97. (2) It can be interpreted as administered area.

separate identity when they migrated down and assimilated with other people in the hill slopes and the valley.

4. Indo-Aryans

Migration theory traces the origin of the Indo-Aryans in the Arctic circle or the Bactria (Rhode) or the Pamirs. According to Basham, around 2000 BCE, semi-nomadic barbarians, who were tall, comparatively fair, and mostly long-headed, inhabited the great steppe land, which stretches from Poland to Central Asia. They were a branch of *Indo-Germanic* (Indo-European) people or the *Wiros*.⁴³ During their eastward migration due to divisions, dissensions or overgrowth of the population in a circumscribed area, they occupied a common habitat at Central Asia, European Steppes, north of Black Sea, Central and Western Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, *etc.* They spoke *Indo-Germanic* tongues and had an affinity in the forms of grammar and roots of verbs to the Persian, Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Celtic, and Slavonic as if they were descendants of a common ancestor.

Indo-Aryan connection: In Manipur, scholars like Pandit Atombapu Sharma articulate a theory of the Aryan origin for the Meiteis.⁴⁴ According to him, the Meiteis were a group of *Kshetriyas*, descendants of one Mithil who had emerged out of the mortal remains of King Nimi who had died due to a curse by sage Vashista. The descendants of Mithil came to be known as Mithis. Other writers, though contradicted the view from Atombabu, however, believe in the presence of Aryan elements amongst the Meiteis. Sir James Johnstone propounded that the Meiteis were descended from an Indo-Chinese stock with some admixture of Aryan blood, derived from the successive waves of the Aryan invaders that had passed through the valley during the pre-historic days. Brown also says that although the general facial characteristics of the Meiteis were of the Mongoloid type, there

⁴³*Wiros* meant *men*, according to Dr. P. Giles.

⁴⁴Refer his book *Meitei Kirtan*.

was a great diversity of feature among them, some of them showing a regularity approaching the Aryan type. However, O.K. Singh states the Aryan influence on Manipur came very late only when Hindu religion had been adopted in the 18th century CE.

The theories of the Aryan origin and the admixture of Aryan blood are refuted by many. McCulloch observes that the origin of the Meiteis was obscure, and the written records having mostly been composed since they became Hindu were not worthy of much credit. S.N. Parratt asserts that the most remarkable claim for the Aryan (Vedic) origins for Meiteis might be found in the voluminous writings of Atombapu Sharma. She argues, that Atombapu's attempt to draw parallels at so many points between Meiteis and Vedic culture, even to the extent of claiming that the Vedas began in Manipur was too much like special pleading to be convincing.⁴⁵ J. Roy refutes the claim of Pro-Hindu writers and states that a small section of Manipuris strongly believed that they were of western and Hindu descent. On linguistic and anthropometrical grounds, this idea is untenable. The theory of the fusion of Aryan blood could have been formulated by the 19th-century writers who had based their analysis by Sanskritised oral accounts widely prevalent at that point of time and the perceptions derived from their actual direct contact with the Sanskritised people of the valley at the time of their writing.

Mere reference to concurrency (such as similarities of terms and Sanskritised names of places and persons) could not adequately substantiate the theory of the Aryan origin for the Meiteis. The concurrencies, if not coincidental, are effects of Sanskritisation and must be located in the timespan of the post-18th-century phenomenon. It would be an oversight if the dominating presence of the Australoid, Austric, and mongoloid elements would be deliberately ignored on the flimsy grounds to fulfil the agenda of Sanskritising history. However, one cannot deny that there were migrations of the people of Indian origin who subsequently settled and absorbed into Meitei fold, namely; the

⁴⁵Saroj Nalini Parratt. (1980). *The Religion of Manipur*. Calcutta: Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd. p. 2.

Meitei Bamons, Kshetrimayum, Lairikyengbam, Roys, Meitei Pangals,⁴⁶ and a section of *Bishnupriyas*. The absorption has been completed to the extent that it is today difficult to point out visible difference markers between a *Hinduised Meitei* and *Meiteised Bamon*. In the words of Prof. Gangmumei, “the Meiteis as a whole are not Aryan, but there are Aryan, Australoid and Austric traces, that too had been assimilated in the Mongolian melting pot.”

From the above study, this chapter argues that Manipur from the earliest time to the 18th century CE was more connected to Southeast Asia demographically, culturally and socially. Though the influence of Indian culture in the form of Hinduism and Buddhism had touched the land and people of Southeast Asia from early times, the region in its larger canvas had developed its own characteristics, which distinguished itself culturally and socially from the rest of the world. Some of the peculiar features, which characterized the people of Southeast Asia, are: (1) Cultivation of irrigated rice fields; (2) Domestication of oxen and buffaloes; (3) Rudimentary use of metals; (4) Skills in navigation; (5) Importance attributed to women and of descent by maternal line at the early part of history; (6) Animism; (7) Worship of ancestors; (8) Location of abode or shrines at highland places; (8) Burial in jars or at dolmens; (9) Backwardness in various degrees in further inland and mountains; (10) Development of unique culture on the basis of blending of aboriginal tribal culture with imported cultures, *etc.*

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⁴⁶Meitei Pangals (Manipuri Muslims) are absorbed in Meitei fold except for religious factor.

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Origin and Composition of the People of Manipur

The ‘indigenous’ people of Manipur are officially classified into the following categories, namely; (a) General, (b) Other Backward Class, (c) Scheduled Tribe, and (d) Scheduled Caste. They are also classified, by social affiliation to broader nomenclatures, into the following, (a) Kuki-Chin. (b) Meetei/ Meitei (including Meitei Bamons and Meitei Pangals), and (c) Naga. These communities had been living together and enjoyed shared experience for long historical times. The shared experiences had been the outcome of shared geography, economy, polity, culture, inter-marriage (matrimonial connection), legends, traditions, history, fortunes and misfortunes and so on. A unique history pertaining to a single community cannot be constructed without bringing into account the history of shared experiences with others.

This chapter is an attempt to bring into the analysis of origin and composition of the communities that collectively constitute the people of Manipur. The chapter is being organised into two broad sections, (I) Origin of Kuki, Meitei, and Naga Nomenclatures; and (II) Origin and composition of Tribes and Clans. Firstly, the first section deals with the genesis of the nomenclatures, within each of whom several communities are clubbed. Each of the terms is being discussed under different sub-headings. Secondly, the second section studies the origin and composition of communities (tribes and clans) on the basis of legends, oral traditions, and historical accounts.

The author subscribes to and advances the theory of shared existence and assimilation across racial, linguistic, community and cultural boundaries since the time immemorial. The previous chapter had extensively dealt with various waves of migrants belonging to various racial, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This chapter articulates that social conversion across and within communities had been a cultural norm as there had been no practical taboo against social intercourses in various forms both in

spaces and times. This process over a span of centuries had survived in collective memories and traditions, as noted by British officials. According to T.C. Hodson, a tradition brought the Moirang tribe [clan] from the South, the direction of the Kookies [*Kuki*], the Koomul [*Khuman*] from the East, the direction of the Murrings [*Marings*], the Meitheis [*Meitei*] and the Looangs [*Luwangs*] from the North-west, the direction of the Kabuis. Dalton also suggested that the linguistic affinities and physical characteristics of the Meiteis connected them with the Nagas and the Kukis.¹ The traditions are substantiated by scientific research, such as linguistic survey and anthropological analysis. Grierson places Meiteis linguistically as one of the groups of Kuki-Chin people. He states that Kuki-Chin linguistic denomination was a purely conventional one there being no proper name comprising all those components. Meitei-Chin would be a better appellation, as the whole group could be sub-divided into two sub-groups, Meiteis and various others which were known to them under the names of Kuki and Chin.² Grierson again classifies Kuki-Chin group into Meitei, Old Kuki, Northern Chin, Central Chin and Southern Chin sub-groups.³

Historical accounts maintained by Meiteis and certain existing cultural traditions would substantiate the theory of shared existence, affinities and assimilation. First, many Meiteis merged with other communities for various reasons. For instance, in the first century CE many groups of Khaba lineage, in the absence of a chief, were scattered all over. Many of them fled and became Kabuis and Tangkhuls. While many amongst Poireiton's horde merged with other communities. Second, Meiteis provided accommodation to and assimilation of migrants from other communities into its fold. On the one hand, many ancestors of Meiteis in the valley were migrants from hills where other

¹ Edward Tuite Dalton. (1872). *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*. Bengal: Superintendent of Government Printing. p. 48.

² George Abraham Grierson. (1987). *Languages of North –Eastern India*. Vol. II. Delhi: Gian Publishing House. p. 509.

³ (1907). *The Imperial Gazetteer of India. The Indian Empire*. I. Oxford: Secretary of State in India in Council. p. 393.

communities were living. Till today many Meiteis regard hilltops and nearby slopes as abode of their ancestors. On the other hand, legends prevalent amongst hill village communities suggest migration into and assimilation with Meiteis. Third, while there are stories that suggest that many Meiteis were descendants of migrants from Makhel⁴, some sections amongst the people living in hills believe that their ancestors had migrated from Imphal valley. The dynamics of affinity, merging, and evolution are being discussed as follows.

I. ORIGIN OF KUKI, MEITEI, AND NAGA NOMENCLATURES

All nomenclatures are historical creations. A nomenclature might have evolved spontaneously over a span of centuries without leaving a trace of the exact date and location of their creation, that its banal usage places it under mundanity without significant functional projection of it in a political sense. Quite contrary, there can be nomenclatures that are entirely mechanical and novel in their appearances and promotion in space, time and functional objectives. Both these categories are historical artefacts, created by human beings. The nomenclatures such as Naga and Kuki fall into the category of either creation or popularisation by the British in the 19th century CE. It is said that the meanings of these nomenclatures lack clarity and suffer from obscurity. While each of these nomenclatures would suggest for attribution of a generic title to a set of communities projected by the British from above; the mechanistic super-imposition of appellation from above could not wipe out the historically evolved and stable community name of each of the comprising units. As a result, each unit or sub-unit continued to recognise one another by their respective original name. Preservation, protection and function of the respective clan

⁴ Makhel, a village, about 3 kms from Tadubi town, in Senapati District (Manipur); many in northern hills considered it a point of dispersal/origin. Meitei legends considered they were either descendants of Makhelians or originated from Koubru range, which is close to Makhel.

or lineage still exist even amongst Meiteis on matters related to auspicious cultural occasions.

1. Kuki

The term Kuki appears for the first time in Rowlin's article titled 'On the Manners, Religion, and Laws of the Cucis, or Mountaineers of Tipra,' published in *Asiatic Researches*, Volume II, 1792. It was probably derived from Assamese or Bengali term for Hillman, which was applied to communities, namely, Lushais, Rangkhols, Thadous, and their cognates. In Chinese, the literal meaning of the term *Kuki* stands for those people who had initially inhabited the tracts around *Ku* Lake. Some believe it a phonetic variant of *Khu-Ki*, that is, a combination of the words *Khu* (a Himalayan tribe) and *Ki* (a tribe of Chin origin originally belonging to south-western Yunan). Ibohal Singh believes that *Kukis* were a mixture of Lai and Khu tribes. Dr Kamkhetang believes that the term was coined by outsiders for a group of Chins. *Kukis* in India and *Chins* in Burma are the same. *Kukis* are otherwise known as *Kuki-Chins*.

Some writers believe that the term *Kuki* was a historical and colonial concept. The origin of *Kuki* nomenclature is unknown. According to P.S. Haokip, the term had found usages only with the advent of British in 18th century. Before that the communities or clans constituting *Kukis* were known after the names of their respective villages, chiefs, clans, and by peculiar references attributed to by others. T.S. Gangte states that the designation of *Kuki* was never used by the people themselves though at a later historical period many of them would answer to it when they were being addressed upon by that designation. In Manipur, prior to the inception of Pakhangba era, *Kukis* were known as *Chingburoi* (owner of hills). After Poiraiton's arrival, that is, after 33 CE, they came to be known as *Hao* and later on as *Khongjais*.⁵

⁵ P.S. Haokip. (1998). *Zale'N-Gam, The Kuki Nation*. KNO Publication. p. 26.

a. Old Kuki: The term *Old Kuki* was originally attributed to Rangkhols, Betes, and their offshoots that appeared in the timeline of Cachar at around 1800 CE. B.N. Bordoloi believes that they had moved into and settled in North Cachar Hills under the pressure of Jansens and Thadous or because of their nomadic habit. In the context of Manipur, according to Lt. Col. Shakespear, the appearance of Old Kukis— Aimol, Anal, Chowte [Chothe], Chiru, Kolhen [Koireng], Kom, Lamngang [Lamkang], Purum, Tikhup, and Vaiphei—was found in royal chronicle as early as the 16th century CE. Though the date may be doubtful, the references indicate that their migration was much earlier than their relatives such as Rangkhel and Bete that entered Cachar.

b. New Kuki: The term *New Kuki* denotes Thadous, Jangshens (Singsons), and their offshoots. Lehman believes that they were pushed out of Chin Hills into Manipur and Naga Hills (Assam and Burma) by Lushais in the middle of the 19th century.⁶ Vumson asserts, that by about 1850 CE Thadou or Khuangsai (Khongjais) appeared in Cachar and Manipur and British used the term *New Kuki* to mean them. He locates Paite within the fold of *New Kuki*. In Manipur, except for the time relating to their arrival, an outsider may not find distinguishing difference marker between *Old* and *New* Kukis.

2. Meitei

There are various interpretations of the origin of the term *Meitei*. Some of those are (1) *Meitei*, according to Tangkhul folk tales, is derived from Tangkhul words *Mei* (fire) and *Thei* (see). Once upon a time, there were two brothers. The elder (a Tangkhul), who would live in the hills, before his departure from the valley, instructed the younger brother, who live in the valley, to light up the fire, at a given time, to signal his existence. The younger brother obeyed the instruction, and it became a widespread

⁶ F.K. Lehman. (1978). *The Structure of Chin Society*, Aizawl: Firma KLM Private Ltd. p. 5.

tradition. From this, those of people of the younger brother in the valley came to be known as Meithei. Meithei, later on, was corrupted as Meitei; (2) *Meitei*, according to Hundung Tangkhul version, is derived from the word denoting their kin in the valley who adopted the culture of other people; (3) *Meitei*, according to T.C. Hodson, is derived from a combination of two words, namely, *Mi* (Man) and *Thei* (separate); (4) *Meitei*, according to Naoriya Phullo,⁷ is derived from a combination of two words, namely, *Mee* (men) and *Átei* (others). It was a name coined by the early settlers of the northern slopes of Manipur valley; (5) *Meitei*, according to Ch. Buddhi, is derived from an ethnic blending of *Mi* and *Ti* tribes of ancient China. Buddhi, at the same time, went further in mystifying that the words were deemed to be derived from the combination of words, namely, *Mei* (fire) and *Ti* (water) symbolically denoting two geo-historical spots, namely, *Nungjeng Pukhri* (Nungjeng pond) and *Kangla Surung* (Kangla cave) respectively. Gangmumei rejects such mystification, on the ground that it lacked substantiation and contradicted the hypothesis of ethnic blending; (6) *Meitei* is derived from the blending of *Mee* (a tribe of China) and Tai people. This view is articulated by Marcel Granet, who believes in the existence of tribes called Man and Mee.⁸ Man and Mee were pushed further south due to the pressure of the Chinese empire, much before the migration of Tai. Subsequently, settlements of Tai-Mee or Mee-Tai were found on the highlands and slopes of Koubru Mountain (Manipur) in the early period of history along with that of Tibeto-Burman settlements.

Historically, the nomenclature *Meitei* seems to have developed after the establishment of a settlement in the northern slopes of

⁷one of the pioneers of Meitei revivalist movement of culture and religion.

Refer his book *Meitei Houpham Wari*.

⁸ Period coincides the reggin of Shih-wang-ti and construction of the Great Wall frontier of Northern; Granet writes, *Through it China found herself in contact no longer only with the Jong, the Man and Me, divided tribes, but with the great nomad peoples, whom the Chinese called the Hu and the Hiong-nu*. Marcel Granet. (1950). *Chinese Civilization*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. p. 100.

Manipur valley. Gangmumei believes that the nomenclature was used during the establishment of Ningthouja dynasty by Pakhangba in the 1st century CE, to mean all the ethnic and social groups who were politically and socially integrated into a collective group under its suzerainty. Originally, it could be a generic nomenclature attributed to early settlers, such as, Mangang, Wangam, and Poirei, who later on came to be collectively known as Mangang or Ningthouja. The nomenclature *Meitei* might have been coined, by the people of Tibeto-Burman origin, for migrant Tai and its cognates. In this regard, the views of T.C. Hodson and Naoriya Phullo seemed more plausible. The Burmese term *Mee* (man) was commonly used amongst communities in Manipur and Southeast Asia. The term *Atei* (others) is commonly used amongst them. Kukis use the term *Adei* to mean others. The meaning of the term *Meitei* (separated man or migrated man) seems to be more logical and coherent.

3. Naga

There are diverse views on the origin of the nomenclature *Naga*. The views are as follows: (1) *Naga* is derived from Assamese word *Noga*, a name applied by them to the hill tribes in the hinterland of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar Districts; (2) *Naga* is originated from Kachari word *Nahngra* (warrior or fighter); (3) *Naga* is originated from Tangkhul word *Naokhoka* (a courageous child); (4) *Naga* is derived from Sanskrit word *Nag* (snake) and *Nagam* (hill) or it might have derived from Hindi word *Nanga* (naked);⁹ (5) *Naga* might have, according to E.A. Gait, S.E. Peal and Helcombe, derived from Sanskrit word *Nok* or *Nog* (people or folk); (6) *Naga* is derived from Burmese word *Na Ka* (pierced ear);¹⁰ (7) *Naga* is, according to V.K. Nuh, derived from Chinese

⁹This view is rejected on the ground that the Nagas were neither snake worshipers nor all of them were naked.

¹⁰However, some scholars have different view and suggest that it had been a long time since the Nagas crossed over the Burmese mainland and the adoption of the word at much later period is not satisfactory.

word *Natcha* (Naga). The search for the most satisfactory view on the origin of *Naga* appears to be continuous.

In the context of Manipur, the communities who were being grouped under *Naga* knew one another by the name of their respective community name. However, the British, for certain functional purposes, had adopted the nomenclature to mechanise categories or otherness applicable to a group of communities by their anthropological understanding.¹¹ Whatever the case might be, it was Hinduised Ahoms and British who had accorded officially attributed the nomenclature to a group of people in Naga Hills. In the beginning, the term was not applicable to any community in Manipur since no community in Manipur were either naked or snake worshippers. No mention of *Naga* is found in the legends, traditions, and ancient texts of Manipur.

II. ORIGIN AND COMPOSITION OF COMMUNITIES AND CLANS

The origin of the people of Manipur is shrouded in mystery. However, historians have been making efforts to reconstruct from the patches of information extracted from the sources of history such as oral traditions, beliefs and canonical texts. All these throw some light on the almost symmetrical stories of origin, that is, people emerging out of the subterranean region through a hole or gorge or cave guarded at the entrance by a ferocious animal waylaying to kill and devour. Most communities trace their origin to *Leikut-Leirai* (caves and gorges) located in Manipur hills. However, it has not been proven if human beings had ever evolved from the soil of Manipur. It is equally difficult to identify who were the aboriginals or the first settler migrants. The legends of evolution from caves or khuls need to be thoroughly studied. The presumed places of origin could be places of community sojourn in the long course of their migration from a subterranean region. It could also be places of dispersion of kin on the eve of

¹¹ Gangmumei Kamei. (1991). *History of Manipur*. Vol. I. New Delhi: National Publishing House. p. 23.

split migration to other directions and spaces. However, migration either from beyond or within was not a single event that occurred in a single phase. There were several waves of migration by different hordes at different times and spaces.

Migration might have not necessarily been peaceful social intercourse. At times a horde of migrants might have confronted pre-existing settlers. There are legends of pre-existing creatures or beings that a new horde of settler migrants had to either confront or reconcile with. For instance, there are references to mysticise or allegorise or dehumanise creatures such as *Saroi*, *Ngaroi*, *Yongmu*, *Yong-meisang*, and *Yong-meitat* who not only pre-existed those of orally or textually humanised migrants. Who were they? More research is needed to identify those allegorised creatures scientifically. Research, in future, must invest to provide useful clues to the history of origin, composition and assimilation of the compositing segments that constitute the people of Manipur.

For the present section, the focus, though very brief, is on the following communities (tribes or clans), (1) Aimol, (2) Anal, (3) Angom Nongpal/Nongbal, (4) Chakpa, (5) Chenglei-Thangyi, (6) Chiru, (7) Chothe, (8) Gange, (9) Hmar, (10) Kabui, (11) Kacha Naga, (12) Kege-Moirang: (a) Iwang, (b) Kege, (c) Khuyon, (d) Kouba, (e) Nangoi, (13) Khaba-Nganba: (a) Khaba, (b) Nganba and Khumucha, (14) Kharam, (15) Khuman-Nongyai: (a) Khayoi/Kharoi, (b) Mayang-Thongnang, (c) Nongyai, (16) Koirao (Thangal), (17) Koireng, (18) Kom, (19) Lamkang, (20) Luhuppa-Tangkul, (21) Lushai, (22) Mao-Maram, (23) Maring, (24) Mate, (25) Mizo, (26) Moyon, (27) Nungpan/Luwang: (a) Heirem-Khujan, (28) Paite, (29) Paomai, (30) Poirei-Wangam-Ningthouja, (31) Purum, (32) Tarao, (33) Thadou, (34) Vaiphei, and (35) Zou.

1. Aimol

Aimols believe that they emerged from a *surung* (cave) guarded by a tiger at its entrance. According to legend, there was one Khorthangpi, a woman who introduced the art of weaving. Her husband wore the cloths she had woven and killed the tiger.

Regarding the origin of the term *Aimol/Aimul*, Shakespear believes that there was no general name attributed to the groups that constituted Aimol. On the contrary, Aimol initially could be the name of a village. It is probably derived from Lushai words *Ai* (a berry or crabs, and appears in *Ai-Zawl* or Aijal) and *Mual* (spur of a hill). Most probably the original *Aimul* would be found in the centre of Lushai Hills.

According to K.S. Singh, Aimols made their first appearance in 1723 CE. They are said to have come from *Tipperah* (Tripura/Tui-phra). However, at that time the eastern boundary of Tripura was not determined, and the more significant part of the present Lushai hills was supposed to be more or less under the control of Tripura king. In Manipur, Aimols are concentrated in Chandel District, but there are settlements in Kangpokpi District as well. Most of the Aimol settlements in Manipur are found at (1) Aimol Tampak, Chandonpokpi, Chingnughut, Khodamphai Ngairong Aimol, Kumirei, Satu, Soibong (*Khudengthabi*), and Unapal in Chandel District; (2) Kha-Aimol, and Luichungbum in Churachandpur District; and (3) Tuikhong in Kangpokpi District. Some of the important clans of the Aimols are Khoiching, Laita, Lanu and Songthu. They have customary, cultural and lifestyle affinities with Chothe, Koireng, Kom, Monshang and Moyon. They are being placed under the category of Old Kuki.

2. Anal

There are different views about the origin of the term *Anal*, such as (1) *Anal* was derived from Meitei word *nanba* (slippery); and (2) *Anal* was derived from the name *Angal* or *Analpa*, the founder of Anal Khullen village. Anals believe that their forefathers had emerged out of a subterranean region called *khul* (cave). The ancestors were Hansu and Hantha. Initially, they were in a cave. When they tried to come out of it, a tiger was laying at the entrance which would kill anyone it could prey upon. Only Hansu and Hantha could escape. Hansu's descendant was Chanang, and that of Hantha was Kori. The descendant of Chanang was Mochum, and that of Kori was Molcha. Chanang and Kori were

again sub-divided into thirty-nine and forty lineages respectively. On the other hand, Anals identified themselves with *Pakan*¹² community. According to their belief, there was a course of migration in which *Pakan* community got split into, the Anals, Lamkang, Monshang, and Moyon. Anals are placed in the category of *Old Kukis*. They resemble a lot to Lushai-Kukis in placing under taboo consumption of a mountain goat called *sasan*, on the ground that they were originally delivered from its womb.¹³ They have a close affinity with Lamkang, Monshang and Moyon. Anal settlements are concentrated in Chandel District (Manipur) and Haika, Nga Kala, and Napalum villages in Myanmar.

3. Angom-Nongpan/Nongbal

Angom is a generic term for those who were amalgamated under the leadership of Angou Pureiromba.¹⁴ Angoms and Wangam are considered to have the same origin. Their origin is traced to Kangkhui cave in Ukhrul District (Manipur). However, this theory is not accepted by those who argue that Kangkhui cave could be a place of sojourn and not a place of origin. According to Kullachandra Sharma, Angoms belonged to Tai Mung with strong elements of Himalayan and sub-Himalayan tribes, and they migrated with Wang.¹⁵ They are also being identified with Nongpan or Nongban,¹⁶ one of the most important sub-clans of

¹² *Pakan*: exact meaning obscure; some loosely translate it either *Hill man* or *Original man*. It's common amongst the Anal, Moyon, Monshang and Lamkang and connected to migration from the mountains south of the present habitat. Gangmumei Kabui. (1985). *Anal: A Transborder Tribe of Manipur*. Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 52.

¹³ Haokip. *Zale 'N-Gam, The Kuki Nation*. p. 32.

¹⁴ A senior contemporary of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, who ascended the throne of Kangla in 33 CE.

¹⁵ *Wang-tsa*, inhabited in west of Mekong, noted for expertise in cavalry and martial qualities. Their women fought bravely. *Wang-tsa* helmets were studded with cowries. Padmeswor Gogoi. (1999). *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms*. Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall. p. 96.

¹⁶ The terms *Nongban* and *Nongballon* were often used correspondingly as prefix of male and female names connected to Angom. In the epical

Angom Salai. They settled in different places in Koubru Mountain and were accordingly known by different names. Those who settled on the peaks of Koubru came to be known as Nongpan /Nongban, that is, a term derived from *Nong* (rain) and *pan* (*settle*), meaning settlement at higher region where there is cloud/mist or those who settled above the rain or cloud.

Nongbans, according to Ibohal Singh, belonged to a Tibeto-Burman people of Tai origin. They came from the hive of Tibeto-Burmans in the north of Hukong (Hukwang) Valley,¹⁷ through Somra tract to the source of Thoubal River. Nongban as a generic term encapsulated several sub-tribes or clans, namely, Angom, Hitam (Hijam), Khuyol, Kongpa, Lera-Khongngang, Luwong (Luwang), Ningol-Laiton, Phantek, and Selloi-Langmai or Nongmai. Among these people; Hitam, Khuyol, Luwong, and Ningomba, were scattered in different principalities. Others like Kongpas settled at Turel Langmeipung, Lera Khongngang at the source of Yangoi (Thongjaorok River at Bishnupur) rivulet and Phantek at Khuroi Haora Langmangtong (Bishnupur). These sub-tribes are being considered as direct descendants of Angom Pureiromba.

During their sojourn at Nongmaiching, it is believed that Angoms inter-mingled with Selloi and Langmai of neo-Tibetan tribes who settled at the source of Kongba River called *Kongba-ru* (the source of Kongba River)¹⁸. Langmai and Nongmai were cognate tribes that merged with Nongpans. Later on, these two tribes came to be known as Langmaithem or Nongmaithem, which together with the other tribes mentioned above came to be known as Angoms. At Nongmaiching hills their leader assumed the title *Pureiromba*. According to Sanathoi Piba, Angom King assumed the title *Pureiromba* at Kangla. Ibohal Singh assumed that this

narratives of *Moirang Kangleiron*, Atha Kongyanba was referred to as Nongban Atha Kongyanba. The queen of Meidingu Ningthoukhomba, a woman of Angom clan, was referred to as Nongballon Linthoingambi.

¹⁷ Hukwang Valley; situated at the Upper Chindwin region (Burma), borders Arunachal Pradesh (India).

¹⁸That they are different tribes is known from the fact that Khuyoi Tompok, son of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, married to a girl of Langmai people.

group of people is supposed to be a south-western section of Tai immigrants who moved as far as Thailand and settled on the north of Mekong River. They mixed with Tibeto-Burman and other Asiatic tribes while sojourning in northern Burma.

4. Chakpa

Chakpas, also called *Lois*, are believed to be an ancient people of Manipur. Asho¹⁹ believes that Chakpas were one of the three original inhabitants of Burma, such as Thet, Mon, and Pyu. Kullachandra Sharma asserts a similar view and states that Chakpas were descendants of Pyu²⁰, a branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of southern China having common ancestors with the original settlers of Myanmar. Ibohal Singh believes that Chakpa dialects showed an image of early proto-Sino-Tibetan dialects like that of Kachin. However, Chakpas believe that they were the original settlers of Manipur and did not come from anywhere. Dr Parratt believes that they might have inhabited Manipur before the arrival of Meiteis.²¹

According to ancient text *Chakparon Khuntaba*, Chakpas had seven ancestors, namely Chakpa, Chikchikpa, Loupan, Pangkak, Sawang, Tangba, and Sawang Nongphuren Achiba. However, the progenitor of Chakpas in Manipur is believed to be Sawang who had ten offshoots, namely, Amengmit, Chakpa, Hora, Horin, Kasi, Menangmit, Menongmit, Nonglon, Nongphu, and Tangba. The sub-clans of these tribes were Angba, Chirang, Ikong-Seng,

¹⁹ Asho covers all Zo people living in Arakan, Burmese plains, and those of Khyangs in the Chittagong Hills Tract. Vumson. (1986). *Zo History*. Aizawl. p. 42.

²⁰ Pyus of Myanmar: migrated from southwest China with their capital at Sri Kshetra, six miles east of Prome; practicing both Hinduism and Theravada Buddhism, and being non-violent; considered the most peace-loving people in Southeast Asia. D.R. Sar Desai. (1997). *Southeast Asia, Past & Present*. Noida: Harper Collins Publishers. p. 32.

²¹ S.N. Parratt. (1980). *The Religion of Manipur*. Calcutta: Firma KLM (Pvt) Ltd. p. 4.

Kamu, Kasi, Lolang, Oinam, Sawa, Sekta, Seringba, and Wangban.

5. Chenglei-Thangyi

Chengleis, also known as Thanga- Kambong, were powerful up to the time of the accession of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. According to *Chengleiron*, Nongda Lairen Pakhangba took over administration from *Sorarel Ariba Ahum*, that is, the chiefs of Chengleis, Luwangs, and Nganbas. After that, the three *Sorarels* decided to settle at the ancient favourite area of Chenglei, on the opposite bank of the river on the north. This legend substantiates that Chengleis had been ancient people of Imphal Valley.

The main component of Chenglei and Sarang-Leishangthem is believed to be Thangyis. However, Ibohal Singh asserts, that Thangyi was a Chenglei clan, who had an association with Thangnga and Kampong clans belonging to *Man*,²² who are believed to be aboriginal of China. He traces their lineage to Tibeto-Burmans. To substantiate the view, he refers to Chenglei adoption of Tibetan suffix *ba* in the name of persons, such as Thangyi Khongjomba, Chingjen Naral Panganba, Toubung Khongdoiba, and so on. Thangyis possibly got mixed with Ngangois of *Thoubal* tribe. Their leader had also assumed the title *Sorarel*. Kullachandra Sharma, however, believes that Chengleis were linguistically Austronesian and racially southern hybrid Mongoloid. Successive waves of immigrants had mingled with them and Laotian immigrants of late centuries had probably brought the appellation *Chenglei*. The axis people of Chenglei, Haorok-Konthou, Lokha-Haokha, Lokhu-Lokhan, Lokton, Potshangs, Thangyi (Sarang and Leishang), were Tibeto- Burmans with the tint of Mon-Khmer and Tai.

²²*Man* was first applied distinctly to those populations, and more especially to those occupying the modern provinces of Ngan-huy and Kiang-si of China. Colquhoun., Archibald. (1985 Imprint). *Ethnic History of the Shans*. Delhi: Manas Publications. p. xLiii.

6. Chiru

Chirus believed that they were originated from *Khul* following the Purum tribe. The term *Chiru* is believed to have derived from a historical settlement site called *Chibu*. As per legends, Chirus released small flying insects known as *Phulim* to distract the tiger that guarded at the opening of the cave. While the tiger was frightened with the *Phulim*, the Chirus escaped from the cave. Before migrating to Manipur, they were settlers of Falam in the Chin State of Myanmar.

Their lineage is traced to Rezar, the son of one Chongthu who was the ancestor of Chongthus, who are still found in Lushai Hills, and whose name also appears in Thadou pedigree. Chirus believe in the theory of the origin from *Khul* and has the legend of migration similar to Hmar. According to the legend, a leader of Chiru mistook a foggy area to be plain area and led his followers into it. However, it turned out to be a deep gorge. Many Chirus plunged into it and perished. However, there were others who did not fall into it. They migrated to Lushai Hills and thence entered Manipur and distributed in various settlements. They are divided into five exogamous clans, namely, Chongdur, Danla, Dingthoi, Rezar, and Shampor. These clans are settled into nineteen lineages. They have close affinities with Koms. At present Chiru, settlements are found at Bungte Khullen, Charoi Khullen, Dolang Khunnou (Khoirok), Dolang, Kangchup Chiru, Lamdangmei, Nungsai Chiru, Sadu Chiru, Thangjing Chiru, Uran Chiru, and Waithou Chiru.

7. Chothe

The term *Chothe* is believed to have been derived from an ancestor called Kachothe. Earlier they were being referred to as Purum, which signified a village or a settlement. Chothes believe that they had originated from a *surung* (cave) known as *Huipithorang*, which was blocked by a big boulder. Due to an increase in population, they decided to migrate elsewhere. The boulder at the mouth of the cave was opened by the horns of a

wild buffalo. However, a tiger, at the mouth of the cave would devour anyone coming out of the cave. To overcome the difficulties, clothes called *Laiyengphi* (godly cloth) and *Laithang* (godly sword) were given to a man called *Athaopa/Makanpa*, to lead people out of the cave. The tiger seeing the cloth with strips, which is similar to its own strip, befriended with *Athaopa*. Subsequently, *Athaopa* was able to let his people out of the cave and emigrated. Another story suggests that Chothes had migrated from a cave called *Huipithorang*. By the command of God, a wild buffalo used its horn to open a flat rock at the mouth of the cave. Thus, Chothes were able to come out. Though the exact cave site is unknown, it is believed to be at Lingleh Waishu. Chothes are composed of nine clans and twelve lineages. According to Maipak Chothe, the progenitors of Chothes were Kachothe and Thanidam, who were believed to be the descendants of a mythological snake god *Pakhangba*. The descendants of Kachothe and Thanidam were *Athaopa*, *Keyang*, *Makanpa*, *Marimpa*, *Parpa*, *Rangsaipa*, *Shinginlu Shinginchong*, *Shinginlu Shinginthum*, and *Yurungpa*. *Shinginlu Shinginchong* and *Shinginlu Shinginthum* were considered to be females.

8. Gangte

The term *Gangte* meant men originated from *Gang-land*. They had a traditional recitation known as *Khawchuk*, that details the memories of their migration. Gangtes believe that they had originated from Mongolia and arrived at the Great Wall of China. From there, they migrated to *Gang Land*, which could be a major place of dispersal, now identified with Laitui Village in Myanmar. Gangtes had a legend of origin from *Khul*, a legend that has been survived in their *Lawmla* dance. It is believed that by the blessings of a dragon (corresponding to Meitei god *Pakhangba*) they had lived happily at *Gang Land*. When the dragon cursed them, they suffered and migrated to many villages till they arrived at the existing settlements. They were divided into three *Phungs*, namely, *Teklah* with three *behs*, *Thangjom* with nine *vehs*, and

Thanglum. Among the *vehs* were Hilkhieng, Mate, Neihsiel, and Thangzom, each of which consists of a number of lineages.

9. Hmar

Hmar people migrated at Manipur sometime during the 1600s, and their neighbours called them Kukis. Hmar traditional songs and folklore indicate that they were related to Sinlung (Chinlung) civilisation. It can, therefore, be inferred that the original home of Hmars was Sinlung, somewhere in Central Asia. They migrated from Sinlung because of pressure by the Chinese. Some Hmars believed that Sinlung might have been the name of a cave from which they and their kindred tribes like the Lushais had emerged. According to tradition, there were two brothers. The elder who had to knot his hair on the forehead because of a sore on the nape of his neck was called *Hrunsawm*. The younger who knotted his hair on the back of his head was called *Tukbemsawm*, that is, a synonymous word for *hmarh*. Hmar were descendants of *Tukbemsawm*, and it is from *hmarh* that the term *Hmar* was derived. However, there are others who suggest that the literal meaning of Hmar was a *northerner*. Hmar in Lushai word is north, and Hmar people were so named because they inhabit the north of Lushai. Hmar had the following clans namely, Banzang, Biate, Darngawn, Hmar-lusei, Hrangkhawl, Khawbung, Lawitlang (Hrangchal), Leiri, Lungtau, Ngurte, Pakhuang, Thiak, and Zote. Hmar-Lusei is so named because they were the descendants of Chuauhanga Lusei who lost his way and joined hands with Hmars. In Manipur, Hmars are distributed in the southern parts of Manipur dividing into some twenty-one clans having two hundred and ten lineages approximately.

10. Kabui

Kabuis also believe that they originated from a cave with a tiger at its mouth. The legend says that by the command of Dirannang the God, 'Gaichang' the Bison removed Taovei Paak the flat stone out of the cave on the condition that he would be free from all duties

on the earth. In turn, the bison also demanded from Dirannang to decorate his elevated horns with shining crimson colour and also his quadruped legs with strip colour of black and white at his ankles. As soon as the demands were conceded, the bison removed Taovei Paak, the heavy flat stone that covered the mouth of the cave with his horns. After the removal of the stone, people inside could see the bright shining sky and shouted Ramting *Kabin* meaning 'sky is shining bright' which, in the dialect of the Kabuis is called *Tingpuk Gaanmei*. The cavemen were led out by Dirannang and Dichalu in human appearance.

According to another tradition, Kabuis traced their origin from a cave, which was blocked by a large stone at the mouth of the cave. According to Meijinglung states that a Mithun removed the large stone and thus made way for the people to come out. Hence this occasion is given as a reason for their reverential attitude for the Mithun which is used for the sacrificial purposes only and never used in any form of manual work, (Meijinglung, 1972). It is also believed that the Kabuis sojourned in eastern Burma before entering India. According to the legends of Zeliangrongs, there were three brothers: - Liangmei, the eldest; Zimei (Zeme), the second; and Rongmei, the youngest brother. They migrated westward from Makhel and settled at Oklong. After some time, the second brother went further west and the youngest to the south where the Zemeis and Rongmeis are living now. The settlement of the Zeliangrong to the north extended up to place where they met the Angami; to the south, it is stated that once it extended upto Shangshong in Churachandpur District.

Another tradition says that the Kabuis originated from a cave known as Ramting Kabin, somewhere near Oklong village under Mao Maram areas (Manipur). They emerged out of the cave with the help of a boar and a mithun. According to traditions and beliefs, the omnipotent Ragong created all. As per his direction, Dampapu and Dampapi created men and women after the image of the supreme god. Dirannang and Dichalu, the first men and women, had four sons, namely, Khadi (ancestors of Liangmei and Zeme), Dichalen (progenitor of Kabui) and Namgong (progenitor of Maram). It is also believed that human being called Haumei

once lived and came out of the cave. Another tradition says that they originally came from a place on the hills to the south of Manipur valley. However, Manipuris placed their origin at Khebu-Ching, near Aqoi route. Songbu a branch of Kabui are the strongest in numbers; they inhabit the hills to the north of the road, chiefly lying along *Acqui* route.

Regarding the composition of Kabuis, McCulloch states that Koupooee [*Kabui*] was comprised of two tribes, namely; Songboo [*Songbu*] and Pooeroon [*Puime*]. Kabuis were also known as Rongmeis and some of their sub-tribes as Kacha-Nagas. Kabuis are divided into four main clans, namely, Gangmei, Gongmei, Kammei, and Longmei (Rongmei). Except for Longmei (Rongmei), the rest are composed of sub-clans. Kapuis belonged to Tibeto-Burman Linguistic group, which is closer to Bodo language, maybe because of their later contacts with them. Ibohah Singh observes, that some of the Kabuis, particularly those known as *Kacha Naga*, in particular were products of mixing²³ with Cambodian tribes, particularly Funans. He believes that Kabuis were supposed to be a cognate tribe of Kabo, Kachin, and Karen whose ancestral home was the ancient Teru state of Southern China.

11. Kacha Naga

The term Kacha Naga is supposed to have been derived from Angami word *Kesta* (thick forest). It is said that once an outsider had visited Konica area of Nagaland. He pointed to Zeme and Liangmei areas of Manipur and asked if any people were living there. Local people responded that some people were living beyond *kesta* (thick forest). Since then outsiders referred to those living in that forest as *Kesta*, that is, people who live in the thick

²³*Kabui*, earliest Meitei reference is found during the reign of Irengba (c. 1296-1310). When queen Tamheibi desired a statue of the dead king Irengba, the royal sculptor Kabui Haochongba Haochong Nangmucha was assigned for the task. Wahengbam Ibohah Singh. (1986). *The History of Manipur*. Imphal: W. Kishori Devi. p. 212. Kabui Salang Maiba is a legendary figure in the epic of *Khamba Thoibi*.

forest. There is another legend that traces the origin of Kacha Naga in Ramting Kabin, which is being derived from the words *Ram* (land), *tin* (sky), and *Kabin* (narrow passage). Ramting Kabin (*trans.* Narrow passage between earth and sky) is believed to be located in Mao Maram area of Senapati District (Manipur). From cave, they moved and settled in and around Chawang Phungning, which is being identified with Makuilongdi located in the eastern part of Senapati District. Today, the term *Kacha Naga*, which is attributed to Liangmei and Zeme tribes of Zeliangrong nomenclature, has no social relevance except that it has been enlisted in the Scheduled Tribes List of India.

12. Kege-Moirang

Historians assumed that the people of Moirang were composed of different *ethnies*. According to Gangmumei, when Moirangs migrated, Kege were already a dispersed community without a chief or political set up. Soon they amalgamated to become Kege-Moirang. According to Kullachandra Sharma, Moirang was composed of many tribes, namely; Arong, Iwang, Kege, Khuyon, Khwang or Kwang, Kouba, Mayang, Mung-Yang, Ngangoi, Thongnang and so on. It is also believed that before the migration of Tai in northern Burma, some of the component tribes of Moirang, such as Kege, Kouba, and Ngangoi of Tibeto-Burman origin had settled for some time at Mirap Shan and Kase Shan. They later on migrated and settled at the banks of Loktak Lake in Manipur. There are also people like Thongnang Kumpi who might be of Austro-Mongoloid origin in Moirang fold.

However, there are different opinions regarding the origin of Moirang. They are: (1) Moirang and Angom had a similar origin; (2) Moirang were descendants of god Thangjing,²⁴ who is being identified with Leishang Khekwaiba, son of Sorarel (sky god). In Haorok-Konthou version Khoriphaba is the progenitor, who is

²⁴ Thangjing; probably a title attributed to Pureiomba, Pakhangba and Sorarel. Some believe that the ancestor of Moirang Thanging Koiral Lai and Leishang Khekwaiba who might have assumed the title Thangjing could be different persons.

being identified with Leishang Khekwaiba; (3) Ibohal Singh believes that Thangjing Koirel Lai, the Tai leader of the horde of Tai Lai, Tai Ngai-Lao, Tai-Moi etc. of Iwang, Kwang, Mungyang, Khuyon (Tibeto-Tai hybrid) and Arong (Tai-Long) migrated from Mirlap Shan and arrived at Manthak Thayailon or Loiren Sanapung and settled there for some time before entering the hill ranges adjoining Moirang on the west. The hill where Thangjing Koirel Lai settled for some time came to be known as *Thangjing Hill* till today. From there they descended to the adjacent plains on the banks of the Loktak Lake, which was in occupation of none of the chiefs or kings for a long time. Thangjing Koirel Lai became king, and the history of Moirang began. (4) Moirang belonged to a group of Tibeto-Burman people who migrated into Manipur valley through Chin Hills and Kobo Valley; (5) the word *Moirang* was derived from a people called *Marian* by *Mareme*, a tribe settled in the south-western hills of Manipur, to mean the land of the sun.

a. Kege: Some historians believe that Kege were inhabitants of Moriya²⁵ principality located in the Kobo Valley of Upper Burma. According to W. Ibohal, Kege migrated to the south of Imphal valley during the reign of Moriya Phambalcha. He believes that the name *Kege* was derived from the word *Khe*, a name used by Pong or Mau Shan to denote the Yunanese of China. Shan and Ahom chronicles also mention about *Hke* as a semi-independent country in Upper Burma once ruled by one Htem-Hkam, a nephew of Lengdon²⁶ and father of Hkun-Long and Hkun-Lai.²⁷ According to Ibohal Singh, Mau Shan (Tai) notably called them *Khe* and Poireis called them *Kege*, *Keke* and *Ki*. Logically, Kege were a mixed race. The bulk of the population is believed to

²⁵ Moria is classic name of the Kubo valley and there is also the Moreura Petropolis of Ptolemy. Mauroya is now known as Mueyen, a Burmese town not far from Bhamo. Gogoi. *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms*. p. 111.

²⁶ Lengdon was the ruler of wide country of gods who deputed Khunlung and Khunlai to rule the earth. R.S.G.C. Barua. (1985 Imprint). *Ahom Buranji*. 1930 First Impression. Gauhati: Spectrum Publications. p. 5.

²⁷ Gogoi. *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms*. p. 128.

be Chin, initially mixed with Tai and later on with Sakya (Chakha), Pyu and other Tibeto-Burman tribes. They first settled at Ithai on the south-east of Moirang and expanded to Ngangkharawai on the west. They occupied the southern portion of the valley before the migration of Moirang.

b. Khuyon: Some scholars believe that Khuyons were the first group of people to migrate to Moirang. Khuyon Khunda Hanba, the leader of Khuyons, occupied Thangjing hills. The footsteps of Khuyons were followed by other small groups of people, and they settled at the nearby hills of southern Manipur valley.

c. Iwang: Iwang is considered to be one of the nine tribes of Tai-Lai scattering from the Brahmaputra to Chin Hills. In the annals of Moirang, there are references to names of persons incorporating the title *Iwang*. Legendary and historical personalities of Moirang territory such as Thoibi, Telheiba and Atengpa were also known as *Iwanglon Thoibi*, *Puriklai Iwang Telheiba* and *Iwang Laikacheng Atengpa* respectively.

d. Kouba: Koubas were also known as Koubarel. They had settled for some time at the slopes of Koubru and passed through Kangchup hills and Khuroi Haora Lamlangtong at about 4th century CE. They finally settled at Kege Oknarel and Moirang Thangnarel (present Ngangkharawai). Koubas are believed to be of Tibeto-Burman origin. They had hostilities with neo-Tibetan Poireis who were in more significant number. They abandoned their settlement and migrated to the south of valley on the banks of Loktak Lake near the present Ngangkharawai. They intermingled with Keges. They came to be known as Moirang Anouba or Moirang Thokchom.

e. Ngangoi: Ngangois, according to Ibohal Singh, belonged to the Himalayan origin. Their earlier settlement was probably at the source of Thoubal River. According to the ancient text *Poireiton Khunthokpa*, while Poireiton was searching for a settlement, he met one Ngangoi Yoimongba who was clearing a river at its

source, possibly the upper course of Thoubal River. In a later period, Ngangoi amalgamated with Kege–Moirang, and at times the post of chieftainship passed into the hands of Ngangoi origin.

13. Khaba-Nganba

Khaba-Nganba consists of three major groups, namely; (1) Khaba, (2) Khumukcham, and (3) Nganba. They came to be collectively known as Khaba-Nganba. Kullachandra Sharma believes that Khabas belonged to Southern Mongoloid with a strong element of Semang–Sakai people from Austro-Asiatic cradle station of *Leinung*, a spot probably located at the banks of Manipur River (Kate Khwong) and beyond not far from the border of Manipur in the southern part of Kabaw (Kabo) Valley. They followed Poireiton's route and arrived at Kangla in the 1st century CE. Later on, the group was composed of Khaba, Khumuk, Longkhumu, Manding, Nganba, Nongcheng, and so on. They are considered to be the descendants of the migrant of Tibeto-Burman origin. Some believe that they had the same origin with Boro/Bodo of Assam. Linguistic evidences suggest the possibility of the migration of a section of Bodos who became the ancestors of some sections of the people of Manipur.

14. Kharam

Kharams, according to their legend, had migrated from a mythical cave called *Laiyaing-you Laiyang-phai*. When they came out of the cave a ferocious tiger devoured them one by one. One day a wise old woman wove a cloth called *ponjar* in the colour pattern of tiger-motif known as *Sampui*. It was worn by an old man of Saichan, a clan of Kharam, and he led the people out of the cave. The tiger seeing the cloth mistook them as its kin-folks and did not eat them. The Saichan old man and the tiger became friends, and therefore it is a taboo for Saichal to kill and eat tigers or any other animals having an affinity to the tiger. Originally there were twelve clans, namely; Inthek, (Inthet), Jaiche (Yaiche), Kailam, Maken, Marem (Mariam), Naisam, Rakhou, Rangla, Saichal,

Saiphu, Seilon and Than'jol. Of these the first seven clans and four sub-clans, namely, Rangla Khouchung, Rangla Khounoi, Saiphu Kalen, and Saiphu Kasin still exist. Linguistically and culturally Kharams are close to Aimol, Chiru, Chothe and Koireng.

15. Khuman

The legendary and literal origin of Khuman is identical with that of Luwang. One Arong, a grandson of Poireiton, was the founder of Khuman principality. Arong's son Tumahanba had two sons, namely, Lungba and Nungthongai. Lungba settled at Thoubal and became the chief of Khumans. There is a proposition that Khuman was an amalgamation of Khuman-Kham groups of Poireis (Meiteis). According to Ibohal Singh, Khuman was an amalgamation of *Khu* and *Man* tribe in the *Khunung* set up. It could be either *Man* people living in *Khu* area or a blended tribe of *Khu* and *Man* living in *Khu* area. *Man* people are said to be of Mon origin. A cognate tribe of *Man* is called *Miaotzoe* by Chinese and *Mios* by Shans. According to Dr Chatterji, the *Man* were possibly early offshoots of proto-Sino-Tibetan speaking Mongoloids. Khumans moved to Upper Assam where they came to be known as Mismis. He further assumes that the main component of the group, Khuman belonged to the Southern Mongoloid and mingled with the Tibeto-Burman tribes of the Mon race like Thanga Kambong, Mon, Chin and Neo-Tibeto-Burman like Leinung, Khayoi, Hangoi, and Kachari-Bodo tribes like Thongnang and Tripuri-Bodo tribes like Mayang. It is also believed that some of the *Khu-nung Khu-mans* came to Imphal valley along with Poireiton. The group was composed of Chin, Leinung, Mayang, Mon, Nongyai, Pong or Bong, Thongnang, *etc.* Pong or Bong a Mao-Shan tribe, also had a strong influence in the composition of Khuman. After the ancestors had settled at the east of Loktak, they absorbed different tribes, namely; Hangoi, Heirem, Kharoi, Khunjans, and Nongyai. These tribes became sub-lineages within Khuman social fold, which became Khuman Salai.

a. Khayoi/Kharoi: Khayoi/Kharoi were believed to be of Chakpa origin. They had earlier settled at Khuroi Haora/Haoba Lamlangtong hills. The community appellation *Khayoi* was frequently used as prefix attributed to Khuman women. For instance, the name of one Kaireima, a wife of Naophangba, was *Khayoi-rol Kaireima*.

b. Mayang-Thongnang: First, the term *Mayang*, as referred to in Meitei ancient and medieval texts, were people of Tibeto-Burman origin, namely, Bodos, Cacharis, Dimacha, Tripuris, and so on who entered Manipur from *nongchup haram* (western door). According to Ibohal Singh, the name *Mayang* was also pronounced as *Meiyang* (fire-glittering) where *Mei* was a Tibeto-Burman word meaning *fire* and *yang* was a Tai word for *glittering*. Some scholars believe that the term *Mayang* was derived from the word *Mayango* or *Mayang*, which was a capital of Kacharis situated at or near present Maibung Railway station in Assam. Ibohal Singh concludes that Mayangs were a mixed people of Bodo and other tribes of Tai origin. Second, Thongnangs were a hybrid of the Himalayan tribes of Tibeto-Burman origin and people of Dravidian origin who settled beyond the western boundary of Manipur.

c. Nongyai: Nongyais were numerous and prominent. They became a synonym of Khuman and a blended term *Khuman-Nongyai* became prominent. In ancient days Khumans were also known as *Adon* or *Nongyai*. They are believed to be a cognate of Nongbal/Nongpan. Nongyais are one of the earliest settlers of Manipur. They established their settlement in and around the hillocks and foothills of Koubru Mountain along with Nongpans and Wangams. The Nongyais first migrated to the east of Yaingangpokpi at a place located at the eastern fringe of Manipur Valley. Then they moved towards the south of the valley where they amalgamated with the Khumans.

16. Koirao (Thangal)

Koiraos were also known as Thangal and Koyla as well. Initially, they inhabited nine villages in the hills south of Maram and Kairong or Kaipong (Karong). Dr Grierson placed them in Naga-Bodo sub-group from Mao or Sapvoma. However, Colonel McCulloch opines that they were closer to Kaupooees (Kabuis) than their northern neighbours. Thangals believe that they had originated from a cave where three brothers once lived together. The three brothers were dispersed to different directions from a place called Makhel (Makhel or Makhek). The eldest settled at Thangal Surung and became the progenitor of Thangal tribe. The second, who went to the east and settled at Hundung, became the ancestor of Tangkhul. The youngest, who went to the valley and settled at Kangla, became the ancestor of Meitei. Koirao were divided into: (1) patrilineal clans (*Patat*), such as, Angkaisong, Anghangmi, Anrakhangmi, Bolungnami, Dibungnami, Houmi, Hungnami, Kadeikeimi, Pagotnoumi Pampuinat, Rakhongmi, Sagongdumi, Sangeipui, and Yangdengnami; and (2) exogamous lineages, such as, Bomtoukahum, Rangtokahum, and Yangdetouhahum. Their settlements were mostly concentrated at Gailongde, Makeng Thangal, Mapao Thangal, Mayangkhong, Ningthoubam, Thangal Surung, Tikhulen, Tumnoupokpi, Yaikongpou, and *etc.*

17. Koireng

It is believed that the word *Koireng* is derived from two words *Kol* (east) and *Rem* (men). They identify themselves as Koren (Quoireng), Kolreng and Kolrem. The term *Korlen* sounds original, while the term *Koireng* could be a Meitei corruption of the former. *Koireng* traces their origin at a cave known as *khur*. As per the desire of supreme being *Pathian*, their ancestors *Roulphun* (Rolphul) and *Roultei* (Roltei) became husband and wife and gave birth to eight sons, from whom eight clans originated. *Roulphun* and *Roultei*, according to some other stories, were descendants of *Yaolkip* and *Yaolkap* who came out of the

earth. The original eight clans (*phung*) were, namely, Yei, Khonglung, Meriem, Mikan, Shong (Shongthu), Thamtha, Tieltau, and Uirai. Out of these only Shong and Yei exist till date. It is believed that the other six clans had merged with other communities in the course of migration. Koirengs believe that their original home was in Kolram in Karen state (in Burma).

18. Kom

Koms believe that their ancestors had emerged from a cave (*kom* or pit) and hence they were called Koms. The legend of Koms says that Pu Shongthu led a party through a hole, but they were obstructed by a python. Pu Shongthu killed it with a sword called *Chemke*. After that they found a tiger awaiting them at the mouth of the hole. Saichepa killed the tiger and let the people came out of the cave. According to another story, one Karungpa, a cave dweller, wearing a striped cloth resembling tiger's skin befriended the tiger and came out of the hole. Since then hence his descendants have refrained from killing the tiger and consuming their meat. Koms were organised into seven exogamous clans, namely; Korang (Karong), Leivon, Lumpheng (Lunpheng), Mangte (Hmangte), Saicho (Saiche), Serto, and Tolon (Tellein). It is believed that Koms entered Burma between 100 and 200 CE, and moved towards Arakan Hills and Bay of Bengal. After that, they entered Manipur via Tripura. Koms who have close affinities with Koirengs claim that the latter was a part of their community and call them Karen.

19. Lamkang

There are various legends of the origins of Lamkangs (originally *Ksens*). They are: (1) they emerged out of a cave. Initially, a man and a woman who came out of the cave were eaten up by a tiger. A god with two horns, on seeing the horrible sight, drove away from the tiger, and let the couple to emerge out. The couple escaped and became the ancestors of Lamkangs; (2) the first *Ksen* surpassed a monster (*Smangpa*) at the mouth of *Khurpii* (cave). A

man called Benglam bellied the Smangpa by brilliant trick. Smangpa was deceived to believe that it would be shot by an arrow tipped with a poison known as *Kru*. When frightened Benglam took flight and Benglam led his people from the *Khurpii*. The clan who emerged out of the *Khurpii* came to be known as *Khurthuw*, and (3) they originated from the debris of the sun. A woman named Rengthlumnu picked the debris cell (*Kok*) from the top of bamboo and placed it with eggs. It hatched as a human being. The descendants of this person were known as *Kokpii* that came to be popularly known as *langkhing*. Ethnically, Khurthuw were divided into Edar, Jangvei, Kangten, Leivon, Shilsi, Surte, and Tholung. Langkhings were divided into Dilbung, Khular, Sankhil, and Shuwngnem. In the course of time, some sub-clans of Khurthuw were grouped under different names, namely, Leivon and Kruwngmi. First, Leivon encapsulated Surte, Leivon and Kangten. Second, Kruwngmi encapsulated Tholung, Jangvei, Shilsi and others. Lamkangs were close to Anal, Tarao, Moyon and Monshang.

20. Lushai

Lushai is a sub-tribe of Mizos. In Mizo vocabulary, *Lu* means head and *shai* means to shoot. It would suggest that the literal meaning of *Lushai* is a headhunter. However, some scholars say that the term had to be pronounced as *Lu-sei* and not *Lu-sai*. In Mizo *sei* means long. They believe that *Lushai* was a corruption of *Lusei*. Lushais believed that they had descended from a couple who came out of what they termed *Khurpui*, that is, enormous hole. Linguistically, culturally and genealogically Lusei and Hualngo belong to one clan. According to tradition, they migrated from Shan country into Zoram. Lushai comprised ten clans of commoners and six clans of chiefs. The clans of commoners were, namely, Chawngte, Chhakchhuak, Chhangte, Chuahang, Chuaungo, Hauhna, Hrashel, Pachuau, Tochwawng and Vanchhawng. The clans of chiefs were, namely, Palian, Rivung, Rokhum, Sailo, Thangluah, and Zadeng.

21. Mao-Maram

According to Ibohal Singh, Mao-Maram were linguistically connected to Tibeto-Burmans. He believes that Maos were originally known as Mahous. *Mao* is a phonetic variant of *Mahou*, which is an admixture of Bodo and Hou. He suggests the probability of Mons and Asiatic elements being present in Mao-Maram. Mao-Maram and its cognate tribes were also collectively known as *Koyla*. Elwin states that there were eight clans of *Koyla*, namely, Mao-Murram, Mayangkhang, Meithiphum, Purul, Thangal, Threngba, and Tokpakhul. Intermediate to geographical position, Mao-Maram may be said to resemble Kabuis in the south, to blend into Angamis on the north, to Tangkhuls on the east, and to gradually become increasingly like Kacha Nagas on the north and northwest. Isolated, however, within their respective wild mountain homes, various clans of Mao-Maram have come to possess peculiarities in dress, social habits, and language which render it no difficult task to assign to each man his proper clan, if not to fix the very village to which they belonged.²⁸ Regarding the place of their settlement and ethnicity, Dun grouped Mao-Maram in midway between Angamis of Naga Hills and Kabuis of Manipur.

22. Maring

Regarding the meaning of the word *Maring*, according to the text *Poireiton Khunthokpa*, a tribe called *Marem* had welcomed Poireiton by burning an auspicious fire. Since then, those people came to be known as *Mei-ling* (preserver of fire), a term which was gradually changed into *Maring* by Poireis (Meiteis). However, there are different views regarding the origin of Maring, such as (1) Marings had originated from a place called *Laipang Kanthawnapur* (the original cave of mankind); (2) Marings had emerged out of the earth through a hole or cave only after its rock-

²⁸ Verrier Elwin. (1969). *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*. Bombay: Oxford University Press. p. 459.

door *Sharinpa* was opened by a bull. Many men and women who emerged from the cave were killed by a giant tiger called *Homshanu*. Two brave men Sharanga and Dangshawa killed the tiger by throwing effigies of human beings made of cloths; (3) According to Hodson, the original place of Marings was at a site of *Police Lines* in Imphal. According to him, Marings migrated to hills due to heat and mosquito. They took with them fire which became extinguished when they were on a ridge between Hundung and Ukhrlu; (4) Marings had originated from Haubam Marak in Imphal; and (5) The original place of Marings was Leishang Khong village in Imphal. Many rejected the proposition that claims for Marings Imphal as their original place, on the ground that it could merely be a place of their sojourn or dispersal.

Regarding their ethnicity, Marings, according to Ibohal Singh, were a cognate tribe of Mon. According to Elwin, Marings were a Burmese looking people, who tie hair in a knot and allow it to rest almost on the temples. While in many respects these people closely resembled Burmans, in religion and social customs they closely approached Kabuis, but like Mao-Marams, they loved feasts and erected a commemorative pile of stones after each great occasion. Marings were organised into seven clans, namely; Churungna, Kemsowa, Khulbu, Klaya, Makunga, Tangsowa, and Tungtangna. According to Angkham Maring, there were four major clans of Maring tribe, namely; Charanga or Shalleiya (founded by Patar Rangmei), Dangshawa or Dalleiya (founded by Patar Khalse), Makunga or Yorshunga (founded by Patar Kung-Karung), and Tantanga or Parshunga (founded by Patar Tanki Karung). These major clans were again sub-divided into twenty sub-clans.

23. Mate

The term *Mate*, which stands for front beaters, is derived from the words *ma* (front) and *te* (to strike or beat), denoting their migratory tradition. Regarding origin, Mates believe that they emerged out of a cave situated somewhere in the southern part of China called *Khulpi* (great cave). It is believed to be a land lying

on the southern part of China between the southern course of Hwangho and Yangtse rivers. From there, the ancestors of Mates settled at Nawipigam, and from there they migrated to Chindwin River Valley and Upper Burma and settled at Zouyaang Valley for many centuries. The chief of Tuisomyang village Ziltong Mate, however, had a slightly different legend to tell. According to him, a person called Songza was the progenitor of Mates. During their stay at Nawipikhua (subterranean village), Songza went to jungle with his dog Ngeisen to hunt *Salei* (porcupine), which led him to *Khuulpi* or *Sinlung* or *Chinlung*. During the course of migration to *Tungkhuonom* or *Tunggamnom*, his horde confronted *Gulheonupa* (snake couple). Songza and Songthu wearing *phouipi*, *jangsen poun*, *jouditen* (thick cotton cloth and sharp sword) killed them. At the gate, a man called Zahong lifted a big stone and came out of the *Khulpi*. Nemnek, the king's wife, forgotten to bring certain household items, went back to collect it. However, mythical creatures known as *Vongalnu* and *Chalkihou* had closed the gate of the cave. After much suffering and passing through many villages the horde finally established settlements at Tualleiphai and Tualjang. Organically, Mate tribe were organised into three sub-tribes, namely; Anggen, Langsun, and Tethang (Chethang). Langsun had twelve clans, Langgen seven and Chethang had done.

24. Mizo

The word *Mizo*, literally Hillman, was derived from a combination of two words; *Mi* (man) and *Zo* (Hill). They trace their origin to a cave called *Chhinlung* (closed-stone). According to legend, when coming out of the cave, a couple belonging to Ralte sub-tribe made such a loud noise. The guardian-god fearing an increase in human population closed the cave with stone, thereby, preventing any exit. According to a recent interpretation, *Chhinlung* was not a cave but the name of a Chinese prince. The correct form of the word was *Chin Lung*. He was the son of Huang Ti of Ch'in dynasty who built the Great Wall. The prince incurred the displeasure of his father, left his kingdom, and settled in Burma.

The closed-door could easily be the name of the prince to whom the Great Wall was closed. This theory adheres to the projection of Mizos as a component of Mongoloid race that had migrated from the east. K. Kipgen asserts that the question as to what *Khul* actually was a debatable subject. Some Thadou elders believe that *Khul* was nothing but a passage in the Great Wall of China. Zawla believes that Kukis escaped from the Great Wall of China in about 225 BCE during the reign of Shih Hungti (Qin Shi Huang), whose cruelty was at its height. Many, including a Burmese priest at Mandalay and Mizo historians, believe that Mekong Valley was the original homeland of [Kukis or Mizo] and that they had once lived in Hukawang valley.

25. Moyon

Moyons believe that their ancestors were *Mithi* and *Thangjaam*. They led their people out of *Khur* (cave/hole), which was guarded by a giant in the form of a big tiger. It killed anyone coming out of the cave. The tiger was killed, and the ancestors led the people to settle at places such as Siijuur, Tungphaejuur, and Maklaang. However, there are others who believe in a different legend and claim that Moyons emerged from a hole on the surface of the earth called *Shijur*. According to the legend, a tiger guarding the entrance of the hole would devour anyone coming out of it. A cock was deputed to investigate into if the tiger was asleep or awake. The cock, with the help of other birds, surrounded and confused the tiger. Taking advantage of the confusion, Kunbu sprung out of the hole and killed it. Organically, the Moyons were organised into Jingven and Simfhuti moieties. Simfhuti were composed of six lineages, namely, Bawnjjir, Chara, Langlom, Nguwruw, Serbum, and Thimplip. The Jingven were composed of eight lineages, namely, Chinir, Hungam, Khartu, Nigchim, Rael, Wonglar and others.

26. Nungpan or Luwang

The word *Luwang* is said to have been derived from the Thai word for State or government officials. It was probably borrowed by later migrants, which had Thai elements in the composition of Luwangs. As for their origin, the Luwangs were a branch of the descendants of Poireiton who migrated from Khamnung. Regarding lineage, it is commonly accepted that the progenitor of Luwang and Khuman was Senkheiren Poireiton. Senkheiren Poireiton wedded Leima Leinaotabi and gave birth to son Tabung Singmingnaba. Tabung Singmingnaba (Singdabung) wedded Sandong Punemba Chanu gave birth to two sons, namely; Arong and Pamingnaba. The descendants of Arong became Khuman, and that of Pamingnaba became Luwang.

Some scholars believe that Poireiton and his followers belonged to Poi/Pai branch of Tai family. The first Luwang settlement in Manipur valley was at Lamteng (Lamdeng). In the beginning, they had hostilities with Wangams. It was finally settled through the matrimonial alliance. Nungpan was an important component of Luwang Salai. Luwang women, in ancient days, used *Nungpanlol* or *Yoirumlol* as a prefix in their names. Regarding the racial and linguistic composition of Luwangs in time, both Ibohal Singh and Kullachandra Sharma believe in the theory of synchrony of diverse elements. According to their views, Luwangs were composed of the following elements, namely: (1) Arong (a proto-Sino Tibetan tribe); (2) Chairen and Chakpa (Sino-Tibetan tribe); (3) Chingshang and Haokap (Tibeto-Burman tribes); (4) Haoku and Lawa (hybrid of Thai); (5) Heirem and Khunjan (Tai origin sub-tribe); (6) Hicham, Salam and Wakhong (Southern Mongoloid); (7) Khunpham and Ngangcheng (mid-Mongoloid and Austro-Asiatic hybrid); (8) Mahou (a sub-Himalayan tribe); (9) Phunan; (10) Salam and Wakhong (Southern Mongoloid), *etc.*

a. Heirem-Khunjan: Heirem were possibly cognates of Khunjan. They were of Tai origin mixed with neo-Tibetans. Khunjans were believed to be a Tai tribe descended from Ngai-Lao. Heirems

appeared to have settled near Thoubal River somewhere in present Yangangpokpi area. Later on, they moved down the course of Thoubal River along with Khunjans and settled at the outskirts of a new Khuman principality on the east of Loktak Lake. Since then they came to be known as Heirem-Khunjans.

27. Paite

Paite (Paihte) is a term used in India to denote a trans-border tribe that were being termed *Tedim Chin* in Burma. They belonged to the Northern Chin sub-group of Kuki-Chin locally known as Zoumi. Paites consider that they had originated from a cave or pit (*Kom* in Meitei Language) known as *Khul*. Different clans identify different locations of the *Khul*. Those of Gwite and Sakte clans claim their origin from *Chimnuai*. They consider legendary Liandova and his brother to be their forefathers. The story of the emergence from the cave appears to be quite similar to Lushai and Hmar versions of evolution from *Chhinlung* and *Sinlung* respectively. Regarding migration to Manipur, Kamkhemthang believes that Zou, Hmar, and Paite migrated too late to accept and be included in either of the Kuki groups, though all of them belong to the same ethnic group.

28. Poirei-Wangam-Ningthouja

Historians suggested that Poirei-Wangam-Ningthouja is a composition of various groups, amongst which Poirei and Wangam were the most prominent. The background of Poirei and Wangam may be discussed as follows: (1) Poirei, according to Ibohal Singh, was a generic name of the tribes of neo-Tibetans, namely; Chakkha, Kham, Khu, Lei, Man, Nga, and Nung. They are being described as people from Kangla of *Khamnung Sawa*, a region located at the tri-junction of ancient Tibet, China, and Burma; and (2) Wangam belonged to Tai Mungs, Tai Ngai-Laos and Tai Lai. Originally, it is said, Tai-Mung²⁹ belonging to Ai-Lao

²⁹Or Dai-Mung (Great-Tai).

race had founded Hia (or Hsia) dynasty in China before the advent of Chinese. From there they proceeded to and settled at suitable places in Southeast Asia. A branch of Ai-Lao race migrated and settled at the low hills on the west of Manipur valley. They mixed with Poireis and came to be known as Poirei-Wangam.³⁰ Poirei-Wangam lineage ruled Manipur since the 1st century CE and came to be known as Ningthoujas.³¹ Ningthoujas were later on amalgamated with Mangangs. Some scholars believe that Poireis and Mangangs were of the same origin.

29. Poumai

The term *Poumai*³² can be traced back to a grand old man named *Pou* who was also called *Shipfo* by the Memai (Mao), *Sapvo* by the Angami and *Shapo* by the Chakeshang. Poumai legends say that there once lived at Makhel, a couple known as grandfather *Ramari* and grandmother *Machha*. They had three grandchildren who would become ancestors of Poumai, *Chumai* (Meitei) and Angami. In due course of time, when the village became overpopulated, *Chumais* migrated towards the south and Angamis migrated towards the north. Poumais were the last to migrate from Makhel after erecting *god stone* and *tiger stone*. They arrived at Saranamai (*Siifii*). From Seranamai they migrated to three important places namely; (1) Chilivai, (2) Lepaona, and (3) Paomata. Among important villages of Poumais, mention may be made of Chingmai Khullen (Ravomai), Chingmai Khunnou (Zhovumai), Khamson (Khusomai), Laii (Vafimai), Liyai Khullen (Zhaimai), Oinam (Ngimai), Paomata, Tungjoy (Vehmai), Purul Akutpa (Hiimai Khelo), Purul Atongba (Hiimai Reilo), and so on.

³⁰In ancient days *Wangamlon* was used as a prefixed to denote women of Poirei-Wangam-Ningthouja lineage. Panthoibi a mythological figure of Ningthouja lineage was known as Wangamlon Panthoibi. Irom Amubi, Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra and others. (1994). *Sagei Sarairol*. Imphal: Manipur State Kala Akadami. p. 3.

³¹ Derived from the combination of the words *Ningthou* (king) and *Cha* (lineage).

³² Poumai enlisted in the Scheduled Tribes List in 2003.

Altogether there are about seventy-seven large and medium Poumai villages. Most of the Poumai villages are in Manipur, though some Poumai villages are found inside Nagaland, namely, Razeba, Tsiifimai, Zelomai and Zhavamai, etc.

30. Purum

There are various opinions regarding the etymology of the term *Purum*. Those are: (1) The literal meaning of *Pu-rum* is “hide from tiger,” which is connected to Lamkang legend; (2) It is a homonym derivation of *Pu-lum* termite indicating their choice of place, where a termite is signified for fertility and good settlement; (3) The word *Purum* was derived from a flying insect called *Phulim*, which was released to frighten a tiger that obstructed emigration from a legendary cave. From *Phulim* it changed to *Pulum* and ultimately to Purum. Regarding origin, Purum legend claims that they were the descendants of ancestors Tonring and Tonshu who emerged from the earth. They were supposed to emerge out of a cave, but a tiger guarding the entrance of the cave obstructed them. A brave man called Makan, waved a cloth called *Leiyengphi*, which replicated the pattern of a tiger stripe, and let the people out from the cave. Regarding the geographical distribution, T.C. Das, the first ethnographer of the Purum, reported that Purums were distributed into four villages, namely; Chaninglog, Purum Chumbang, Purum Khullen, and Purum Tampak. Today, they are found in eight villages, namely; Chandrapado, Kothapokpi (or Chothe Khunou), Lainngkhul, Purum Chumbang, Purum Khullen, Purum Tampak, Wangparan Lower, and Wangparan Upper.

31. Tangkhul

The word Tangkhul is suggested as connoting a village having avenues or sectors. It was derived from the Tangkhul words *tang* (sector or avenue) and *khaa* or *khou* (village). An avenue is called *tang* in Tangkhul language, e.g., Alung Tang, Atung Tang, Awung Tang, Kasom Tang, and so on. *Khau* (village) in Tangkhul

language has the same meaning as that of *khul* (village) in Meitei language. However, Ronald Shimmi believes that the term Tangkhul might have been derived from Meitei words *tang* (a rare thing) and *khul* (village), to denote a rare village. Regarding the origin of Tangkhul, there are various views, which may be mentioned as follows: (1) T.C. Hodson refers to at least two different legends of origin. The first legend establishes a primordial connection between Tangkhuls and the valley. It is said that Tangkhuls migrated, from the valley to their present settlement areas, because of heat and mosquito. The second legend establishes that Hundung village was a centre of dispersal. Tangkhuls evolved from amongst the immigrants who had dispersed from Makhel Tunggam village; (2) Ibohal Singh believes that Tangkhuls belonged to a sub-Himalayan and neo-Tibetan tribe of Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. They migrated sometime before or after the arrival of Poiraiton by more or less similar route. They settled on the hills lying to the east of Upper Liwai (Iril) valley. They were also known as Wung, and their sub-tribes were Leihou and Mahou. According to Meitei texts, Tangkhul Leihoupok was the place where the Leihous settled.

Verrier Elwin classifies the 19th-century Tangkhuls into two, namely, (1) Tangkhuls of the south (southern Tangkhuls); and (2) Luhupas of the north (northern Tangkhuls). This classification was based on different geographical locations and corresponding differences reflected in terms of dress and hairstyles. Dr Brown establishes that the difference markers were more to do with martial or more war-like character of Luhupa as distinguished from others³³. Other than this, according to Dun, there was no perceptible difference between the two. He believes that Meities, as a rule, applied the name *Tangkhul* to both indifferently. According to W.A. Shimray, Tangkhul in their present habitat shares neighbourhood with: (1) Meitei of Manipur valley to the south-west, (2) Mao-Maram-Poumei to the west, (3) Chakhesang

³³ R. Brown. (2001 Imprint). *Statistical Account of Manipur*. 1873 First Impression. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 37.

of Nagaland to the north, (4) Kachin (Burma) and Kuki to the east, and (5) Maring to the south.

32. Tarao

Taroas believe that they originated from a cave called *Tukleikhur*, situated in Haobi hills in Burma. Persons called Katrimsha, Tlangsha, and Chanesha made attempts in succession to let their people out of the cave. They were devoured by a tiger guarding the entrance of the gate. Finally, a person called Khulpu tricked the tiger with a branch of *Markeeng* tree replicating animal's horn. On seeing a strange man with horns, the tiger fled. Thus, Khulpu led the people out of the cave. According to L. Merre Tarao, Taroas had close linguistic and cultural affinity with Kashung, Kharam, Koireng, Kukis, Narum, and Saibol. At present, there are five villages of the Taroas namely Haikakpokpi, Khuringmul, Leishokching, Tarao Laimanai, [in Chandel District] and Sanakeithel [in Ukhrul District].

33. Thadou

By about 1850 CE, Thadou also called Khuangsai (Khongjai) started to appear in Cachar and Manipur, and British placed them in the category of New Kukis. However, Ibohal Singh believes that Thadous belonged to Tai origin but got mixed with Himalayan tribe Sakya and some other Asiatic tribes. To substantiate the view, he argues that the appellation *Thadou* (Thadou or Thadoi) was probably derived from two principal appellations, namely, *Tho* and *Do* or *Doi*. *Tho* signify a group of Tai people at present occupying chiefly the eastern part of Indo-China on the east of Red River (Song Hong) and Kwangshi in China. They are said to have spoken a dialect of Shan, but their dialect is substantially altered due to the presence of Mons and Anamese.

Thadous living in Manipur and south-east Burma speak a dialect which had substantially changed to Tibeto Burman dialect. According to traditions, there was a father who had three sons

speaking three different languages, namely; (1) Lamyang, by the first son, (2) Thadou, by the second son, and (3) either Vaiphei or Meiteilon, by the third son. Regarding ethnic affiliation, William Shaw believes that Thadous resembled each other very closely and had, generally speaking, a Mongoloid type of countenance. This observation of Shaw needs review. Thadous had close affinities with Aimols, Chins, Gangtes, Khothlans, Koms, Lusheis, Paites, Pois, Suktes, and others. Thadous were organised into principal clans, namely; Baite, Chansan, Chongloi, Doungel, Hangsing, Haokip, Insun, Jongbe, Kipgen, Lamhao, Lhangum, Lhouvum, Lunkim, Lupheng, Lupho, Mate, Misao, Ngoilu, Phohhil, Sahum, Shithou, Singson, Thalhun, and Thanggeo.

34. Vaiphei

Vaipheis believe that their ancestors had emerged out of *Khul* (cave). They believe that they had initially been lived in Tan Valley (Kanshu province of China). They migrated to Burma but left it due to political reasons during the reign of Thibo dynasty of Mandalay. Another theory suggests that there was a village called *Vai-tui-chhun*,³⁴ at a short distance to the east of Aizwal in Mizoram, which was a Vaiphei settlement in the past. If this story is true, it is probable that Aimol and Vaiphei had left their former homes in consequence of the forward movement of Lushais. It is believed that Vaipheis entered Manipur *via* Chin Hills. Vaipheis were organised into clans, each of which was placed under a chief called *Upa*.

35. Zou

There are different versions about the origin of the word *Zou*. One theory traces its origin from a person named *Zou*. Another theory suggests that the term might have derived from *Zhou king* of Chou dynasty of central China. Whatever the case may be, Zous reached Manipur earlier than Paite but later than Thadou. They were

³⁴*Trans.* Watering place of the *Vai*.

pushed northwardly, as a matter of vengeance, by Falam Chin after Zou under Manlun clan had attacked Paite village Phuaizang near Tedim. Ethnically, in the past Zou, Paite and Simte were one group under the reign of Manlun clan. Their affinities were so close to the extent that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish Paite from Zou. Organisationally, they had a clan system (*beh*), which was quite similar to Paite. The hierarchy of *beh* was based on descent. Each *beh* was a uni-descent social group characterised by certain songs or *lapi*. Manlun clan occupied a higher position over other *beh* groups and was a ruling clan. Geographically, Zoumis may be classified into three series, namely, (a) Southern Zou, (b) Central Zou, and (c) Northern Zous. Manipuri Zous belong to the Northern Zou.

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Migration, Distribution and Settlement

The people of Manipur, according to migration theorists, were descendants of those who had moved in three major waves in a different period from different routes. They are Mon-Khmer speaking Austronesians, followed by Sino-Tibetan speaking Tibeto-Burman and Chinese-Siamese. Among them, the Tibeto-Burman speaking people were most prominent with regards to this region. Some scholars suggested that these people migrated in this region in two major waves. According to Chatterji, Sino-Tibetan speaking groups formed an area of dispersion—in some place to the east of Tibet and north-east of Assam somewhere in the present-day Chinese province of Sinkiang (Xinjiang)—from where they dispersed to the east and south¹. They were followed by the Chinese-Siamese speaking group.

The movement of these groups of people trailed from north to south and after that dispersed at different directions, which may be broadly divided into two. (1) *South and South-eastward movement*: This group followed the course of Chindwin, Irrawaddy, Salween, Mekong and other rivers to settle at different places in South-east Asia, and (2) *South and South-westward movement*: They followed the course of the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries and reached Tripura, Assam, Cachar, Bangladesh, Manipur, etc². They also followed the southern foothills of the Himalayas and proceeded as far as Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, Ladakh, and Kashmir.

The migrants (Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burman and Chinese-Siamese) reached Manipur by the following routes, (1) the upper course of the tributaries of Brahmaputra such as Barak River and

¹Suniti Kumar Chatterji. (1950). Kirata Jana Kirti. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*. XVI (2). p. 161.

²However, there are historians who opine that most of the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley are the ones who had roamed around many places of Southeast Asia and entered the region from the south-easterly route.

Dhansiri River on the west and north-west, (2) the hilly terrains across present Manipur-Burma frontier (via Samjok/Thangduat) following upward course of streams and rivulets that fall into the Chindwin on the east and south-east. (3) the upward course of the tributaries of Chindwin River such as Manipur (Gun) River on the south and south-west. This chapter studies; (1) the phases of migration from different directions and (2) some legends and historicity of migration that have been preserved in one form or other by the communities living in Manipur.

I. MIGRATION DIRECTIONS

1. From West and North-west

Migrants from west and north-west were predominantly people of Tibeto-Burman origin. They, after dispersal somewhere at the tri-junction of Tibet, Burma and India, probably crossed Patkai Range and followed the downstream of Brahmaputra (*Ti-Lao*) River and its tributaries, and settled at various parts of Brahmaputra Valley. During the course of their migration, many of them suffered due to want of food, environmental hardships, and inter-group conflicts. As a result, several of them took the upward course of the tributaries of the Brahmaputra such as Dikhow, Dhansri, and Barak and migrated to the hills lying on the east of the Brahmaputra Valley. Before reaching Manipur, but during their sojourn in Brahmaputra Valley, some of them had blended with people of different origin, namely, (1) Austro-Mongoloids from the east and north-east, and; (2) Indo-Aryans and Dravidians from the west and north-west. During intermingling, some of them might have been influenced by *Tantric* culture. This could be a reason that certain Meitei³ ancient

³No doubt many people traced their place of origin to the place of their sojourn or place of dispersal from a major group. This may be because of their missing link with the place of their original settlement in the absence of folk songs, traditional stories relating to their origin and migration or may be for other reasons.

texts were found mixing with some *Tantric* words and symbols.⁴ It is believed that Tibeto-Burman people from the west and north-west were one of the earliest migrants to Manipur. They settled at the eastern slopes of the western hills of Manipur before dispersal towards the northern highlands and hills around Koubru Mountain. There they intermingled with the later migrants from the east and south-east to become the ancestors of Poirei, Mangang and other sub-lineage of the Manipuri Meiteis and many other hill village communities of the western and northern hills. Till today many people in the hill and valley of Manipur consider Koubru Mountain as the original place of their dispersal (*Khoiyum-Khoira*).

2. From East and South-east

Migrants from the east and south-east of Manipur were predominantly Chinese-Siamese origin. Migration from the east was *via* Hukuang Valley, Samjok/Thangduat and other routes by following the upward course of the tributaries of Chindwin (Ningthi) River. They reached the watershed of Lai-yi (Ngari/Naria), Iril (Leel-wai-yi), Thoubal and other tributaries of Chindwin river in Manipur. According to S.W.A. Shimray, the migrants, dispersed from their sojourn in Thangduat (Samjok)⁵

⁴Such books with blended tantric words and symbols have been refuted by many in Manipur.

⁵Most of the communities inhabiting Manipur believe that they had migrated from south, south-east and south-west of present Manipur. However, many Nagas inhabiting the present state of Nagaland believe that they had migrated from different directions, suggesting that the people of Manipur and that of Nagaland have taken different routes of migration. Here B.M. Das stated that all the Nagas have legends, which refer to their movement in Nagaland and the adjoining territories. Taking into consideration all the Nagas as a whole, it may perhaps be said that the Naga came to their country from northeast, east and south east. B.M. Das. (1998), *Some Aspects of the Physical Anthropology of the Tribes of Northeast India*. In Sebastien Karotemprel. Ed. *The Tribes of the Northeast India*. Shillong: Centre for Indigenous Cultures., Shillong. p. 51.

towards a northwestward direction.⁶ Many of them settled at the hill areas of present-day Kamjong and Ukhrul Districts to become some section of Tangkhul, Angom, and other cognates. From there, some of them might have proceeded further north and reached the foothills of Koubru and Makhel⁷ in Kangpokpi and Mao-Maram areas respectively to become important constituent parts of Mao, Maram, Paomai, Thangal, Liangmei, Rongmei, and other cognate hill communities. Those who remained and migrate to the valley became some segments of the present Meitei populace.

Migrants from south-east of Manipur had followed a longer route. From Samjok/Thangduat they followed the downstream of Chindwin (Ningthi) River, proceeded further south and some of them even reached seashore. Thereafter, they retraced back and entered Manipur by various routes. This could be the reason that there were traces of (1) Austroloid shades amongst a certain section of the Manipuri populace, and (2) custom of using cowries, conch, and sea shells. R.R. Shimray is supporting the seashore migration theory for some hill communities of Manipur. It is at the same time believed that they became acquainted with seashells, probably during their sojourn in Upper Burma when they were inter-mingled with Austro-Mongoloid people who had been practising the custom of using cowries, conch, and sea shells.

Propounding another theory of migration, Shimray also believes that some people from Samjok/Thangduat also migrated westward passing high mountains, rivers, and streams until they reached the southern vicinity of the valley. Here many of them

⁶This proposition of Shimray is related to Mongoloid migration, as migration of Austronesian origin Mon-Khmers are taken as the first comers at Manipur by some historians.

⁷Most of the people of Manipur believed that they emerged out of a hole that could be a cave, a gorge, a steep valley before their arrival to their place of dispersal at Makhel, a village three kilometres from Tadubi in Senapati District of Manipur North. Most of the Naga tribes have more or less the same story that they came from a hole in the earth. R.R. Shimray. (1985). *Origin and Culture of the Nagas*. New Delhi: Mrs. Pamleiphi Shimray. p. 16.

might have seen the Loktak Lake of Manipur Valley (aka Imphal Valley) as a vast expanse of water, which could have been much more significant than what it is today. Viewed from the high mountains of present Tengnoupal area, the Loktak Lake might have appeared before them to be very immensely vast. After leaving their kin like Anal, Maring, Monsang, Moyon and their cognate groups in the south and south-eastern hills of Manipur, a chunk of them proceeded further east and arrived at the valley of Imphal and even reached the slopes of Koubru range, where they stayed with earlier settlers. Later on, many of them migrated to the valley to become a component of present-day Manipuri Meiteis.

3. From South and Southwest

Those who migrated from the south and south-west of Manipur are mostly composed of Chinese-Siamese origin with an Austronesian trace in some of them. In the beginning, they followed the lower course of Chindwin River. They split somewhere at the confluence of Chindwin and Myittha rivers. Some of them followed the upward course of Myittha River and its tributaries. Again, they split up at the confluence of Myittha and Manipur rivers. Those who have taken the upward course of Manipur River⁸ reached Manipur earlier than those who had followed the upper course of Myittha River and its tributaries. During their sojourn in Chin State (Burma), many of them settled there to become Chin people, such as Lai, Lai-Mee, etc.

Those who proceeded further following the upward course of Myittha River and its tributaries reached different destinations, such as, Lushai Hills, Chittagong Hill Tracts, and even the sea coast. Many of them settled there to become various Chin-Mizo people. Some of them retraced and entered Manipur from the south and southwestern hills to become various hill communities of south and southwest Manipur. A section of them who migrated

⁸Manipur River: *Kathe Kwang* by Burmese; *Gun River* by Kuki-Chin (Thadou, Gangte, Hmar, Paite, and their cognates), who connected it with their migration or origin (*Makhel-Koubru* area).

at a much later period came to be known as Thadou-Kukis. The legend of Galngam and places associated with his visit are mostly connected with Churachandpur, Pherzawl, Tamenglong, and None Districts. The legend is reflective of migration of Kuki-Chin people in this region.

II. LEGENDS AND HISTORICITY

There are legends of evolution or migration of communities that today constitute the people of Manipur. To what extent these legends could withstand the test of historical accuracy is a different question. However, these legends can undoubtedly contribute to filling up the gaps of the past that have been lost without recovery. Interestingly, every community not only have a legend(s) of their evolution or migration, early distribution of settlements, encounters, and merger with others; they also preserve and promote them to trace the genesis of their respective identity. Some of the legends pertaining to certain communities are discussed below.

1. Anal

Anals consider that they had migrated from Mongolia to Upper Burma, then to Kabo Valley in the trans-Chindwin basin. From there, they proceeded southwards and seen the seacoast of Arakan. There they were divided into three groups, namely, Phiu, Kanjam, and Teh. Another theory suggests that Anals were divided somewhere in Arakan into three sub-groups, namely, Sukte, Kate, and Poite. Sukte and Kate were left behind while Poite retraced towards the north and settled down at a place, which is being identified with the present Chin-hills of Burma. Poite was further subdivided into Falam, Hakka, Kampaleh, Lushai, and Pakan. One group of Pakan moved to the east, crossed Imphal (Arun) River at Tangjeng and founded Limkhu (Anal Khullen). The second group of Pakan moved along Torbung Hills and finally reached Khubung/Khunbung Khullen village where they settled. The third group of Pakan followed the second group unto Dutejoi (Haika),

passed through Lhungpunrang, Kollam (present Mombi), Lamphou, Abung, and crossed Duyang River. They reached Walpa and finally settled at Ransom (Lamphou Charu).

There is another legend as well. It says, two brothers came out of a cave in *Haobi Peak*. The elder brother became the ancestor of Anals. The younger one went to the valley and became a king. According to some elders at Anal Khullen, during their sojourn from South China, some of their sub-groups reached *Lamphu* (in Tripura). From Lamphu, after visiting many places, the group arrived at present Tharon (Churachandpur). In Anal tongue it is *Tharnlon* (land of cemetery), so called because many of their kin perished during their stay there. From Thanlon, they entered Ruwngja, thence to Sajik Tampak, thence to Sarki, and thence finally to Anal Khullen, *i.e.*, about twenty-five kilometres southwest of present Chandel District Head Quarters.

2. Angom

It is believed that Angoms had migrated from Khangkhui (*Khanggoi*) cave, which is situated some sixteen kilometres from Ukhrul District Head Quarters. From Khangkhui, two brothers, namely, Chingsomba and Angouba passed through Sokpao, Kasemjao, Yongphu, Chatong, Kwathel range, Mutao-Luthum, and Shandang Iranpham. From this point, the two brothers separated. Chingshomba went and settled for some time at Makeng Thangal Khul. Angouba proceeded towards Lamlai and Khombidok and reached the valley. As per the legend, both the brothers ruled at Kangla for some time. However, Pakhangba drove them out, and they settled at Nongmaiching (Shelloi-Langmaiching). It is also believed that they had settled for some time at Koubru hills before migration to Nongmaiching. At Koubru, their leader assumed the title *Sorarel*. After their migration to the Nonmaiching/Langmaiching their kings adopted the title *Pureiromba*. However, some scholars suggested that Angom kings assumed the title *Pureiromba* at Kangla.

3. Chakpa

In the 3rd century BCE. Chakpas had migrated from Irrawaddy valley. According to Bheigyachandra, in the prehistoric days, Sawang Noufurels' men (five sons of Yaochik from China) migrated to this land and settled at Susa Kameng, who came to be known as Chakpas. It is said that they entered Manipur through Somra tract where Hobinhian culture flourished. Following the upper course of the tributaries of Chindwin, including Manipur river, they reached their present settlement in Manipur. As the story goes, they arrived at a place called *Mongba Yongsangai*. For some time, they settled in the hill ranges lying next to valley in the west, which came to be known as *Loi-jing* (*Loi-Ching* or *Loi-hills*).⁹ After that, some of them arrived at Lillong (Lilwok Sahoupat), situated at the confluence of Imphal and Iril rivers, some seven kilometres south of Imphal. From there a section of them dispersed and settled at suitable places near the river banks of Kongba and Imphal. The second group followed the track of the first, passed through Hundung, Ningel and confronted with Mao and Maram communities somewhere at the northern hills of Manipur. From there they descended and harboured at the foothills of Loijing. Then some of them moved towards the north and then towards the east by the side of Kangla-Tongbi in Kangpokpi District. Later they reached the north-eastern portion of the valley, where Iril River debouches the valley. From there they retraced and moved towards the south of the valley. Passed through Nongdren, Nongdam, and Andro, and reached Nongpok Sekmai on the south. From there they dispersed into various localities. Thus, Chakpas completed a circuit of settlements around the peripheral regions of the valley when Poireis and other communities from the north move towards the south in the valley.

On the other hand, Chakpa Phayeng and Chakpa Andro believe that their ancestors had once occupied Kangla. Moirangthem Chandra Singh supports this proposition. He stated that a sub-group of Chakpas once ruled at Kangla. They were driven out by

⁹Somewhere near present Leimaram (Imphal West District).

Pakhangba in different directions. There is a story as to the reason of dispersal of Chakpas into different directions. According to one such story, before their separation, two brothers decided to have a meal together. The elder brother (said to be Phayeng ancestor) cooked *Ngakha* (*Pethia manipurensis*) and the younger brother (said to be Andro ancestor) cooked *Khajing* (*shrimp*). When *khajing* became red on being cooked, Andro ancestor believed that it was still having blood and uneatable. The younger brother wanted to wait until *Khajing* became eatable and asked his brother to leave first. The elder brother left asking his brother to follow him, which the younger brother tried, but could not due to the time factor. Thus, the two brothers separated and established two different settlements.

Before the reign of Meidingu Naophangba (428-518 CE), there had been ten Chakpa villages in Langmaiching hills. However, during the rule of Meidingu Naophangba, they migrated to different areas, that came to be known by different names, namely: *Chakpa Thoubantong*; *Chakpa Phayeng*;¹⁰ *Chakpa Leimarang* (*Leimram*), and; *Chakpa Kaotaruk*¹¹ etc. According to Bheigyachandra, ancient Chakpa immigrants who did not mix with the existing population settled at the remote areas near foothills—such as Andro, Phayeng, Koutruk, Leimram, Sekmai, etc, constituted Loi (Chakpa) population. Many of those either banished by or fugitives were also absorbed into Chakpa fold. According to S.N. Parratt, there was a good deal of aristocratic Meitei blood amongst the Chakpas (Loi). In due course of time, they were absorbed into the Meitei community.

4. Chenglei

According to Kullachandra Sharma, about 2500 years from today two groups of people (*Chengleis* and *Khabas*) followed the course

¹⁰Paonam Gunindro. (1996). Poireiton Khunthok Neinaba. *Ritu*. 97 Edition. Imphal: The Cultural Forum. pp. 12-13.

¹¹Kullachandra Singh. and Pandit Achouba. (1993). *Chakpalon Khuntaba*. p. 4.

of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers. They arrived at Thangduat (Hsawngkup/Samjok) and Mangsha. They crossed the hills now lying to the east of Manipur and followed the course of Lin-wai-yi (Iril) River, then crossed the source of Imphal River, and settled at the slopes of Koubru mountain (present day Sadar Hill area of Kangpokpi and Kangla-Tongbi). In the course of time, they got separated from Thangnga Kambong. They settled for some time at Nongmaiching and had good relations with Angoms and Selloi Langmais. They settled at the banks of Nambul River during the time of Thangyi Taobung Khongtouba (Khongdoubu) around 428 CE. Some of them also moved towards the south along the course of Iril River and amalgamated with people living in the south. While some of their branches settled at Loitang, they had independent identity and principality on the north of Luwang habitat. Chengleis are stated to have settled at different places of the valley around the areas of Khurai Salanthong, Langjing, Patsoi, Sagoltongba, Khumbong, Konthoujam Langthabal, Wangoi, Waithou, Khongji, and Keirao.

5. Chothe

According to Chothe legend, a person named Athouba/Makanpa led people out of a cave to a place called *Huipithoranga*. From *Huipithoranga* they migrated and settled at Tarik-Jampebung, Thingtin, Aisanlon, Toujanglon, Tumpokpi, Simnudung, Wainudung, Lungleh-Waisu Tuisurun, Nachongjoi, Saikhuphai, Lungsubung (Chote Munpi), Chainapung Kumpibung, Lamlanglon (Lammangdong Khuman), Lamlanghupi, and Purumkhong. They believe that they had a settlement at Imphal¹² and the houses constructed there were known as *In-phai*, i.e., a combination of words *In* (house) and *phai* (valley), a term from which the present name Imphal is believed to have derived. They believe that they had once settled at Moirangkhom a locality at

¹²Around the present Treasury Office, Imphal West).

Imphal from where they migrated to Mahulon or Khongkhang in Tengnoupal District.¹³

6. Gangte

A group of Gangtes migrated from Tiddim (Tedim) around 1100-1200 CE and settled at the areas around Sugnu. Some others migrated *via* Lushai Hills and entered Tuivai area around 1200-1500 CE. They settled in Churachandpur, Senapati, and Tamenglong districts. In the course of migration, many of them were absorbed into Anal, Chin, Lushai, Poi, Zou, etc.

7. Kabui

Kabuis believe that they had initially been migrated from eastern Burma. There is another theory of their migration *via* the upward course of Barak River and its tributaries. According to Zeliangrong legend, once there were three brothers, namely, Liangmei (eldest), Zimei or Zeme (second), and Rongmei (youngest). They migrated westward from Makhel in Senapati District and settled at Oklong situated at the same District. After some time, the second brother went further west, and the youngest went to the south where Zemeis and Rongmeis are living now. The settlement of Zeliangrong to the north extended unto the place where they met Angami. They extended to the south up to Shangshong in Churachandpur.

8. Kege-Moirang

It is considered that Keges were the first to migrate to Moirang. They first settled at Ethai and then proceeded towards Ngangkha-Rawai. Moirangs migrated from the south and southeast direction. A significant chunk of them are descendants of Tibeto-Burmans of Upper Burma who migrated through Chin Hills and Kobo valley. When Moirangs arrived, Keges had been dispersed without

¹³On Indo-Myanmar road at Tengnoupal District.

a chief or political set up. Soon they amalgamated to become Kege-Moirang.

9. Khaba-Nganba

Khabas are assumed to have migrated from the south-east direction. Nganbas are believed to be the Tibeto-Burman origin and have taken a different route and arrived from the north-eastern direction *via* Makok (Makokchung). There the group was divided into two. The first group followed the course of Dibang (Sikang) River, arrived at Kohima (Thibomei) and entered the hills now settled by Maomeis (Mao-Maram and Paomais). They arrived and settled near Makhel.¹⁴ The second group arrived at present Dimapur entered Barail range and reached Jiri River. From there they moved eastward, crossed Barak, followed Tongjei Maril and arrived at the western vicinity of Imphal Valley and moved to Koubru hills. On the way to Koubru, many of them scattered and settled at suitable places. They became Nganbas.

10. Koireng

Koirengs had migrated via various regions in Burma. Koireng legend says that they had migrated from a place known as Kolram.¹⁵ Their folk song refers to the crossing of Tuiridung (Chindwin River). After that, they settled for some time at Kileng phai, *i.e.*, derived from the words *Ki* (my), *Leng* (visit) and *Phai* (valley), which is stated to be Kabo Valley. From Kolram they moved to Semrojoul. They left the place and settled at Khuonichuna, Khomilai, Khotalu, and Lungsut. These five villages cannot be identified but are believed to be in Chin or Mizo Hills. After that they settled at Lungsen, which is now an uninhabited range in the southern region of Manipur. They further moved to Kailam, which is at present occupied by Paites. From

¹⁴A place some three kilometres from the present Tadubi town in Senapati District.

¹⁵Situated in the Karen (Kayin) State of eastern Burma.

Kailam, they migrated to Tuolching, thence to Mihoibung and Kholaiphiel. Thereafter, they migrated to Toulinlam, Hirium, and Dumdoksuk, which is now occupied by Hmars. From Dumdoksuk they proceeded to Thalkhangtang, thence to Lingsielbung Sielbu, Shamrai, Thueokhoujoul, Ngaitebung, and Tongkho. Finally, they arrived at Thongching near Loktak Lake. At Thongching they came into contact with Moirangs.¹⁶ From Thongching, they finally arrived at Laimanai, which became a dispersal point. From there a group went to Yongabung and another to Thanglongbung, which came to be known as Tuithek. They occupied Bolshien, Namkuong and Thanglongkholien, *i.e.*, the present Longa Koireng in Sadar hills (Kangpokpi District). The Tuithek group was further divided, and one group had settled at Langol Hills.

11. Khami

Khami¹⁷ legend says that once upon a time there was a hill king and his subjects were called *Khami* or *Khunmi*. Khamis had earlier settled at a place called *Tui Ben*.¹⁸ Because of insecurity to livelihood, they passed through a big mountain range and moved west, leaving women and children to come behind. The advance party cut down the plantain trees to mark their trail. When the slower group arrived, they found only growing plantain trees. As a result, they assumed that the advance group had already gone far beyond. So they decided to settle at a suitable place. Thus, the two groups lost each other. The people left behind cultivated land, using shifting cultivation. They frequently moved about in search of new farmlands. On their moves, they fed themselves on fish, oysters, and shrimp caught from streams.

According to another story, upon coming to a big stream, one group caught a shrimp of a much larger size than usual. When

¹⁶As per the description of location, Thongching could be identified with Thangjing-ching.

¹⁷*Khumi* or *Khami* meant villagers. In Paletwa, people called themselves *Khumi* or *Khami*.

¹⁸Vumson believes Tu-Fan is Tibet: uncertain if Tui-Ben and Tu-Fan are similar.

cooked, the shrimp turned red. They thought that the shrimp was still uncooked, and they continued to cook. While waiting too long for the shrimp to be cooked, they were left behind by the other group. At a junction of streams, the first group who followed the right branch came to be known as *Mi*. The group that followed the left branch came to be known as *La*. They eventually met again, where the two streams joined again. Now they have different names, *Mi* for the group that followed the right branch and *Kham* for those who followed the left branch. *Khami* encountered great hardship on their way. In order to cultivate their land in peace, they chose a hill king to rule over and protect them. The land of the hill king was called *Khu*, and his title was *Khukong*.

12. Khuman-Luwang

Many believe that Poireiton, the progenitor of Khuman and Luwang clans of Manipur and his followers had migrated little earlier before the coronation of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba in 33 CE. According to Ibohal, Poireiton came from Khamlei-Minungkol.¹⁹ He believes that Thongarel was often projected as Leinung Koiba Chakka Ariba, *i.e.*, the ancient Chakha the protector of Leinung. Nung people belong to Tai origin with a mixture of Tibetan Mongoloids. Kullachandra Sharma also suggested that the horde of Poireitron include many people belonging to Poi/Pai branch of Tai family. The story of migration is being summarised as follows:

The migration of Poireiton and his followers have narrated allegorically in *Poireiton Khunthokpa* (Migration of Poireiton), though it keeps in disguise the identities of the rulers. They migrated from a subterranean region called *Kham-Nung*,²⁰ where

¹⁹*Kham-lei-mi-nung-kol*; *i.e.*, Kham-land the hive of Nung people.

²⁰[I] **Kam**: (1) A region of Tibet at the tri-junction of India (North-east), China (Yunan) and Burma. S.P. Gupta and K.S. Ramchandra. (1997). *History of Tibet*. New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Research Centre. (2) Ibohal locates it in Hukong Valley at northern Burma and south eastern Tibet. Khami: an area where Nung, Khu, and Lei tribes settled. Nung people

King of Death ruled. As the story goes, once there were three small valley principalities²¹ without absolute authority. One *Waba* (*Kalij Pheasant*) who appeared to be a chief of a smaller group changed his loyalty from one Tokpa Tokmu Meishangba to a new migrant chief Nongda Chingkhanyang Nongil Chek who went underground and turned himself to be *Sabi* immediately after his arrival. Tokpa Tokmu attempted to murder *Waba* who elusively escaped all the time. To overcome Tokpa Tokmu, the fugitive Nongda Chingkhanyang invited Thongaren [the king of Khamnung Sawa (Land of Death)] to invade the land of *Taibangmee*²² (Land of Man). Thongaren directed his younger brother Chingkhong Poireiton (some say Senkheiren Poireiton) to go for colonisation. Poireiton expressed his unwillingness to go without a wife. Thongaren's second wife Leima Leinaotabi consented to go with Poireiton. She arranged one hundred varieties of grains including a variety of paddy which came to be known as *Chakhao Poireiton*, vegetables, many items of dried meats, and cookery items. A special arrangement was also made for preserving and

inhabiting Kham were *Kham-Nung*. Singh., Wahengbam Ibohal. (1986). *The History of Manipur. (An Early Period)*. Imphal: W. Kishori Devi. p. 252. (3) Kham region of Tibet extended to south-east of Hukong Valley. Khami: people of Kham. They were also called Khumi, meaning *village people*. Khami people came Tui Ben. Vumson. (1986). *Zo History*. Aizawl. p. 42.

[II] Nung: Nung or Jung people appeared in the beginning of 6th century BC in the west outside China. When Ts'in Empire expanded they disappeared southwest of Kanshu province towards Tibet. Their descendants, diversified by incessant crossings with Altaic races of Tibet, outside the border of China, were; (1) on the south-west frontiers—Lu-tze or Anung, Lissu or Leisu, Mosso or Na-shi, and others, and (2) more westwards—ethnologic part of Manipur, Chittagong, and Kirati groups. Archibald Colquhoun. (1985 Imprint). *Ethnic History of the Shans*. Delhi: Manas Publications. p. xLiii.

[III] It is yet to verify if Kham region and Kham-Nung mentioned in *Poireiton Khunthokpa* are the same.

²¹Gunindro believes; (1) *Poireiton Khunthokpa* fully described political condition at the time of the ascendancy of *Pakhangba*, (2) *Sararen Aiba Ahum*, allegorically projected *Sabi*, *Wab*, and Tokpa were chiefs of Ngamba, Thangyi (Chenglei) and Luwang respectively. Refer Gunindro. 'Poireiton Khunthok Neinaba.' p. 12.

²²Some believe Tai-bong/Tai-bang was Tai and Pong ethnic groups.

carrying a burning fire.²³ Poireiton with his horde of men, women, children consisting artisans, weavers, medicine men, priest, animal keepers, weapon bearers, jewellery keepers, escorts, camp followers, and so on left Khamnung Sawa in search of *Promised Land* where there would be no death, pain, and pang.²⁴

In the course of migration, they found their passage blocked by a big boulder. When a horned bull removed it, they found some articles missing. They sent Chakriba and his wife Tangribi to collect the articles. They could not re-join the party when the rock blocked the passage again. Two of their advance party, namely, Khumarong and Maibarong, were killed by a tiger. The party could not proceed further. They released caged birds to frighten the tiger, but the plan failed. Then at last, when Leima Leinaotabi released a kind of stinking bees known as *Ngarenkhoi Khoingangjeng*, it attacked the tiger who subsequently fled. At last, they reached Tolong Lampak, which is said to be near the present Mongba Hanba Umang.²⁵ From there, Poireiton directed his people to settle with communities like Thongnang, Takhel, Senbi- Kabo, Tangkhul, Chakpa, Kege-Moirang, and Poirei Meitei.

Poireiton contested the throne of Kangla with Nongda lairen Pakhangba, but he failed. After this, he passed through some eighty-five villages of Shan, Chakpas, Anals, Moyons, Kabuis, Tangkhuls, Marings, Thongnangs, and Poirei Meiteis. He finally settled on the north-western part of the valley at Lamdeng, situated some six kilometres to the west of Kangla beyond Langol Hills and became a king. Meanwhile, Thongarel who stayed back at Khamnung Sawa repented the long separation from his brother and proceeded to Imphal

²³Poireiton's fire still maintained at Andro village in Imphal East District.

²⁴Ibohal Singh identifies Khamnung Sawa with Kangla in eastern Tibet located at the tri-junction of Tibet, Burma and India. But it could be identified with the Kham region of Tibet located at the tri-junction of ancient Tibet, China and Burma situated to the south-east of Hukuwang Valley (now in Myanmar), *i.e.*, straight east to the Kangla of Manipur.

²⁵Some say it is the present location of the 1st Battalion of Manipur Rifles.

valley via Manipur River and arrived at Moirang. He came with his younger sister Laisra or Laisna. Realising the fate of his brother Poireiton, he proposed to his sister to be the queen of Pakhangba. Poireiton, Thongaren, and Laisna were reconciled to the new situation in the valley.

Regarding the migration route of Poireiton, Ibohal Singh suggested that from *Sawa Kangla* they moved to Sarangchu,²⁶ thence to different places one after another, *i.e.*, to Chuwa, Sachung (Tsa-chung), Chayu (Rima), Tong, Tenai, Minzong, Mali river, Chukkan pass (probably Chakkan pass), Loklai river, Chindwin (Ningthi) river, and Somra tract. From Somra tract they entered the present Poi village in Ukhrul, from where they moved to the source of a river they named Leel-wai Yi River which was ultimately changed to Yi-Leel or I-ril.

13. Maring

Marings believe that they migrated from a subterranean region through a cave. One day while some of them were working in *Pungsang* (shed for iron works), a squirrel had brought in a *chahuy* (a bunch of paddies). The squirrel frightened by Marings dropped the *chahuy*. It was entrusted to *Nutar Sammuythar* (great-grandmother of the village), who sowed it in a nearby field. One day when some monkeys fed on the paddy, they were chased by Charanga. The monkeys escaped to the over the ground world through a hole, which was not seen before. Charanga was surprised by the discovery of a beautiful world beyond their Laipang Kanthawnapur and decided to migrate with his brother-in-law Dangsawa and a horde of men and women. On the way, they found their way blocked by a huge stone, which was removed by using a Mithun. However, Charanga went back to collect a dagger he left behind. While he was inside the cave, the stone returned to its former position of sealing the mouth of the cave. Thus, migration was led by Dangsawa, and the clan names

²⁶*Chu* means water in the Tibetan language.

Charanga and Dangsawa came into existence after the names of the two leaders. They came up to the overground world where they saw a tiger at the gate, which was killed by arrows. In order to confirm that the tiger was dead, they sent a bee through the body of the tiger which was shot dead. Royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumbaba* first recorded the appearance of Marings during the time of King Taothingmang (264-364 CE). It is being recorded that Taothingmang had a clash with a chief of Funan Maring who was an excellent archer.

14. Mate

The ancestors of *Mate-Taithuls* moved to seven mountains of Burma from *Khulpi* or the *Great Cave*. From there they returned towards Chindwin valley and founded Tualjang village ruled by Zamang, grandson of Songza. From Tualjang, Mates migrated to ten or more different villages before they reached Siyang village ruled by Sountak chief in the upper part of Chin Hills (Burma). At Siyang village a man named Thanglun had a quarrel with the chief of the village over the customary practice of offering the chief the hind legs of a deer he had killed.²⁷ Thanglun hit the chief by the hind legs of the deer. The infuriated chief expelled Thanglun from the village. Thanglun took away Sikdabuk of Langsun, the head of the clan and fled to Phaiyang. From Phaiyang Mates migrated to Koku village, then Paoboi in Chin Hills. After that they migrated and established their first village called Pangen.²⁸

15. Tangkhul

There are many legends of Tangkhul migration. According to one legend, they came out of a cave at a place called *Mariyangphai*. Initially, were obstructed at the mouth of the cave by a huge tiger, who would devour on anyone emerging out. A man of Chingleini

²⁷This practice is known as *Samel*. The villagers also had to pay a basket full of paddy to the chief as tax towards cultivating the chief's land and this practice was known as *Taangseu*.

²⁸In the southern hills of present Manipur.

clan, when asked to lead the way, told each of them to give him a piece of thread. He joined the threads, rolled it around a bell, which he threw and diverted the attention of the tiger. He took the opportunity and let the men out of the cave. There is another legend reproduced by Brown, slightly different from the above legend. According to this legend, they emerged from a cave at a place called *Murringphy* (*Mariyangphai*) in the hills, about four days' journey north-east of Munnipore (Manipur) valley. They attempted to leave the cave one by one. However, a large tiger would devour anyone emerging out of the cave. Finally, the attention of the tiger was distracted by throwing out an effigy of a man. When they tried to leave the cave in a body, on seeing the numbers of people, the tiger fled. Another legend says that Tangkhuls had stayed for some time at Imphal after their immigration from Samjok or Thangduat. After that, they dispersed in two directions. Tangkhuls took north-eastward direction cutting down plantain trees as a sign for any would be followers, to follow them. The plantains sprouted very quickly, and those who came following them mistook it for an old sign. Instead, they followed the split sign of *rhus succedanea* tree which remained fresh for a longer time, and, thus went to a different direction.

Another legend says that Tangkhuls followed the downward course of Irrawaddy River and reached Mandalay, which is now identified with *Moirengphai*. When they reached the confluence of Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers, they turned right and followed the upward course of Chindwin River. At the confluence of Chindwin and Myittha rivers, the group was divided into two. One group followed the upward course of Manipur River. Another group trailed the upward course of Chindwin River. Tangkhuls who followed the course of Chindwin River halted at different places like Komungna and Shamshok (Samjok or Thangduat). Folk songs of the Tangkhuls support the conjecture that a section of the Tangkhuls dispersed again from Samjok (Thangduat). It is said that at one time a king of Samjok was a Tangkhul. Even today some inhabitants of Samshok or Tongduat (Thangduat) claim that they had descended from Tangkhuls. From Samjok some Tangkhuls crossed Angkoching (Ango or Angou Ching) at

its lower level. Then they passed or entered Kangmong valley, passed through different places—Kangkum, Kangpat, Kongkan Nampisha, Grihang, etc.—and then arrived at the hills tracts of present Ukhrul. The group which went up further in the north through Chindwin River crossed Angoching hills at its upper portion, passed through some passes at Ngachan and Somra, and entered present Manipur.

The group that followed the upward course of Manipur River passed through Chin Hills (Burma) and halted there for some time. Chins of Chin Hills agree that before their arrival at Chin Hills, Tangkhuls had lived there. Megaliths considered to be erected by Tangkhuls still exist. From there, they followed the upper course of Manipur River and reached the southern bank of Loktak Lake. According to Tangkhul legend, present Manipur Valley was a vast lake when Tangkhuls had migrated. Due to unfavourable climatic conditions and mosquitoes, they left it and migrated towards the north-western area of Ukhrul. However, before they reached the place, it is considered that they had halted at Thangal and Makhel villages (Senapati District). From there some migrated to Hungdung (Hungoum). Some section coming from the south-eastern banks of the Lake reached Shokvao, Shangshak, and Leishi. There they encountered the Tangkhuls coming from the Hungdung side. The Leishi group was again divided into two groups; those who went towards north were skilful in spear, and those who went south were skilful in bow and arrow. Before their departure, they erected stone monoliths at Leishi as a sign of their loving memory.²⁹ The group migrating from Leishi reached Kakok or Phungyar. From Phungyar, several groups of Tangkhuls migrated to different areas, such as; Kamjong, Kasom Khullen, *etcetera*. According to R. R. Shimray, after sojourning for many years, Tangkhuls reached an unusually

²⁹In Tangkhul *Leishi* means love, and named the place of their departure as Leishi. Tangkhuls erect memorial stones wherever they settled: e.g., Lungling [*Lung* (stone) and *Ling* (Erection)] and Yurlung [(*Yur* (nation) and *Lung* (stone))] in Yunan (China), stones at Chin Hills, Makhel, Leishi, and Nungpha.

high mountain called *Shokvao*. From there, they proceeded for a better place called *Meizailung/Mavalung* now at Ukhrul.

16. Thadou

Thadous believe that they had descended from one Chongthu who had migrated from a subterranean region called *Shinlung*³⁰ or *Chinlung*, through a cave or deep gorge called *Khun* or *Khunpi*, which are believed to be located somewhere in China.³¹ Thadou legend says that there was a village in the subterranean region called *Nouigam* ruled by a chief called Nouimangpa. They also frequently mention *Chinlung* or *Shinlung* in their migration story. Of course, *Chinlung* or *Sinlung*, which may be a corrupt word of *Kiu-lung*, is situated in China, north of Sichuan and south of Shansi (Shaanxi). According to Laljang Hangshing, “Pu Chongja the elder brother of Congthu was Nouimangpa.” He believes, “Pu Chongthu Khula Kona Ahungdoh.” However, William Shaw thinks that the two brothers Chongja and Chongthu were relatives of the Chief of Noimang,³² which was, comprised of seven important villages, namely, Noimang, Kholoichal, Khopalva, Kothip, Khomang, Khokanglai, and Khkisupi. Shaw continues that one Chongthu, a relative of *Noimangpa*, went hunting for porcupines with his dog and discovered a large hole. He rejoiced and went back to his village. Just about that, *Noimangpa* was performing *Chon* festival. While attending the festival, Chongthu flaunted his sword and injured a person. It angered *Nongmaipa* and howled that Chongthu better be killed. Chongthu immediately

³⁰Dr. Roy Burma identifies it with Sinlung in China.

³¹William Shaw believes, hole in the earth called *Khul* was at the source of river *Gun* (Imphal or Manipur River).

³²Chongthu ruled at *Noimang*, a term derived from *Noi* (below) and *Mang* (kingdom), thereby, suggestive of surrounded by hills. Tarun Goswami. (1985). *Kuki Life and Lore*. Haflong: North Cachar Hills District Council. p. 233.

escaped from the village through the hole he had seen and migrated to *Khul*.³³

As the legend goes, when they reached *Khul* they saw an enormous snake called *Gulheipi* was in possession at the exit point. Chongthu tied his cloth around himself and placed a *Phoipi*, a thick cotton cloth, over his head, and killed the snake. He also came across a lion, who moved away after some exchange of words. The cave was also blocked by a huge stone, which was lifted by a man called Vangalpa (stone lifter). No sooner than Vangalpa had lifted the stone and while he was passing through ravines, Chongthu's parental aunt Nemneh³⁴ retraced her steps to bring back forgotten items. However, before Nemneh could come back, Chongthu broke the leg of Vangalpa and stone blocked the cave. Nemneh could not pass through the gorge. Chongthu did it intentionally as he was apprehensive of trouble; he suspected that his enemies might come with Nemneh and inflict injuries on him. After Nemneh had learned what had happened before her arrival, she cursed Chongthu and his associate. It is believed that only seven persons could go out of the *Khul*.

According to T.S. Gangte, the seven persons who emerged from the *Khul* were: Chongthu, Vangalpa (stone lifter), Khupngam (dog keeper), and four others. These four persons are said to be the progenitors of Meiteis, Nagas, 'foreigner,' and Burmese.³⁵ These seven persons could be leaders of different ethnic groups or allied people of Kuki-Chin led by Chongthu. From *Khul* they arrived at a place called *Chung-gam*.³⁶ Chongthu brought with him many domestic animals and introduced the cultivation of paddy. After roaming around looking for a settlement, Chongthu and his associates came to a big valley and found it ideal for settlement. On a suitable day, Chongthu and his

³³*Khul* lies between *Noimang* and *Chungam*; with a single entry-exit through *Noimang*; identical with Meitei notion of *Ching-Lam*, derived from *Ching* (high) and *Lam* (land).

³⁴Sister of Taichin, who is father of Chongthu.

³⁵Gangte., T.S. (1993). *The Kukis of Manipur*. New Delhi: Gian Publishing House. p. 16.

³⁶*Chung-gam* means *High Land*. Goswami. *Kuki Life and Lore*. p. 233.

followers shifted to the valley. After arrival at a place, Chongthu told his people that he was getting older and no more in a position to keep on moving from place to place. He, therefore, decided to settle at that place on a permanent basis. The place was called *Man-dalai* and was also known as *Chung-Khopi*. The castle they built was called *Manmasi Kulpi*. At this place, Chongthu's two brothers, Chonghen and Chongmang, who came with him from *Noimang*, parted company with him. These two brothers established a new village called *Van-Lai-Khoi*.³⁷

There are other stories as well. According to one story, Thadous, during the course of migration, had settled for some time at the southern part of the valley. It is not sure if the flood had compelled them to move upwards following the downstream of Gun River.³⁸ During the flood, Thadous say, they collected souls at *Kholkipkholjang* where everyone took refuge. This place is located somewhere above Keithelmanbi on the right bank of Imphal River. During the flood, animals were saved at the upper portion known as *Kholkip*, whereas the lower portion was *Kholjang*. Meiteis mention this place as *Khongjai Khuman*, a term derived from the combination of words, *Khongjai* (Kuki), *Khun* (village) and *Man* (old), *i.e.*, old Kuki village.

17. Poirei-Wangam- Ningthouja

Migration of Tais³⁹ from their original abode in Yunan (China) to the land of *Mee* has been allegorically phrased as *Laireipak Sargadagi Kumtharakpa*⁴⁰ and *Laigi Lang-won*,⁴¹ *Nongdagi*

³⁷Names of the two brothers of Chongthu are not mentioned by T.S. Gangte. But they could be two out of the four unnamed persons stated by him.

³⁸It is uncertain if the flood was the great flood in ancient period, as mentioned in the history.

³⁹About 2200 CE onwards, oppression by Chinese emperor Shih-Wang –Ti prompted Tais emigration. Tais nostalgia of their original homeland eulogised it as Heaven (Swarga) and the land of Moi as that of *Mee* (Man). Some Kuki-Chin trace their escape from the Great Wall of China at around 225 BC due to cruelty by Shih-Hungti, Zawla cited in Gangte. *The Kukis of Manipur*. p. 17.

⁴⁰Descending from the land of Lai, *i.e.*, heaven.

*Tarakpa*⁴² and so on. They followed the course of Irrawaddy River. A sub-group crossed Patkai Hills, followed Dihing River and entered Brahmaputra Valley. Another branch followed Chindwin River to arrive at Hkamti. After that they followed Tuzu River and entered the present Nagaland state. Another group that followed Irrawaddy River crossed Mandalay and Kuyohaung and took the course of Chindwin River. Later they arrived at Mingin (Min Kin) in Kale District under Sagaing Division and followed Chindwin River course. The others that followed the course of Manipur River arrived at Falam in present Chin State (Myanmar). They proceeded further, passed *Ching-nung-hut* to reach Wangu Napachik.⁴³ These groups further moved towards the course of Manipur river (Imphal River) and reached the highlands and slopes of Koubru Mountain. Those settled at Koubru came to be known as *Nong-pan*⁴⁴, and their ruler came to be known as *Sorarel*.⁴⁵ Those who carved out small principalities at the foothills of the mountain came to be known as *Nongyai*. The *Nongpan* and *Nongyai*, later on, merged into Khumans and Luwangs.

Other groups of Tai family such as *Black-Tai* or *Tai Dam* (for their black clothing) also settled at the slopes of Koubru and nearby hillocks. They too might have migrated from the Kangla of *Khamnung Sawa* towards the south by a different route along the course of Ningthi (Chindwin) River passing through some gorges and came up to Somra Tract. They possibly might have migrated to the source of the river now known as Iril (Lilwai) River and finally settled at the north of the valley now called Kangla-tongbi and adjoining areas of Koubru mountain. They settled there with Wang or Wangam people and came to be known as *Poirei*,

⁴¹Incarnation of god.

⁴²Coming down with rain.

⁴³A place situated at the extreme southern proximity of the valley of Manipur.

⁴⁴*Nong*=rain, *Pan*=settle; meaning those who settle at the point of rain where the mountain tops meet clouds.

⁴⁵*Sora*=name of a range, *len* or *ren*=mighty; meaning *mighty rulers of the Sora range*.

Wangam, *Awang Poirei Meitei*, and so on. Later on, they came to be known as *Meitei* or *Meetai* (*Mei-Tai* or *Mee-Tai*). Out of these groups, those who established their seat of administration at Kangla came to be known as Ningthouja.⁴⁶ This group of people belongs to one of the nine sub-groups of the *Tai-Lai* people, which was a branch of Ngai-lao.

The story of migration, distribution, and settlement exemplifies certain commonalities amongst the communities of Manipur. They may have organised into various clan lineages, but all of them have descended from certain major racial and linguistic groups. The current lineages were evolved in the course of complex processes of inter-mixing or split that had occurred during long processes of waves of migrations and over several centuries of their settlements in the present geographical space of Manipur. The legends of migration illustrate similar genesis of origin and similar character of escapes from dangers, migration, and establishment of settlements.

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⁴⁶Ningthou = King, *Cha* = lineage.

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Rise and Fall of Principalities to Empire

Traditional historiography emphasises on Nongda Lairen Pakhangba [henceforth *Pakhangba*] as the first historical king of Manipur and traces the beginning of the history of Manipur in his ascendancy to the throne of Kangla in 33 CE. However, there were kings preceding him, who are being clubbed into the mythological, pre-historical or proto-historical category. Discovery of several *puyas*¹ had called for renewed research and rethinking of the conclusions hitherto offered by the dominant historiography. Ongoing researches suggest that the ascendancy of *Pakhangba* was a culminating juncture in consequence of the emergence of principalities over a span of more than a millennium preceding *Pakhangba* and the record maintained by royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumbaba*.² The methodology of research needs to be improvised to avoid from a gross misreading of the allegorical phrases and mythological representations in oral traditions and archaic texts. Historicising allegories and myths, to interpret it correctly and relocate the historical figures and their achievements in the appropriate space, time and context become essential to promote historiography in Manipur. In this chapter, attempts are being made to attribute historical character to the hitherto mythical figures preceding the ascendancy of *Pakhangba*. It also touches upon to trace the genesis of the ascendancy of *Pakhangba* in the pre-existing historical course of the rise and fall of principalities. The chapter is being organised into the following sections, namely; (1) Historicity of Archaic Kings, (2) Rise and fall of Principalities, and (3) Rise of Ningthoujas towards an empire.

¹ Sacred ancient texts

² The cult of *umang lai* reflects feudal mode of production. The *puya Khamnung Ingal Leisaba* slightly mentions duties once imposed by *umang lai* on the people of *Taibang*. Manglem Meitei. (1997). *Khamnung Ingal Leisaba Puya*. (Ahumsuba Saruk). Imphal. p. 3.

I. HISTORICITY OF ARCHAIC KINGS

The text *Khamnung Ingal Leisaba Puya* informs names of Inganglen, Pouprulen, Konjinllangba, Konchilangba, Porong-Nongkhaiba, Taimareng Kinaiba, Lairum Nungphouba, Lairumlen, and Lailum Kangba who ruled in *Langba Chak*.³ Inganglen⁴ subdued autonomous clan chiefs (understood as sylvan deities) and ruled at Kangla in 778 *Langba Chak*. Inganglen was supported in power struggle by Paoroinaba of Wung Laiyek and Sarou Langba of Nga Laiyek. He was succeeded by his son Meidingu Pouprulen who married Leima Ningnaidabi (Nongsna Manik Khombi). Meidingu Pouprulen was succeeded by his son Meidingu Konjalangba. He was succeeded by Konchilangba, Porong Nongkhaiba Taimareng Kinaiba, Lailum Nungphouba, Lailumlen and Meidingu Lailum Kangba. Lailum Kangba's period marked a transition of administration from *Mee* people (Tibeto-Burman origin) to *Lai* people (Chinese-Siamese origin). He is being projected as foster father of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba⁵. His wife Leinung Yakhu Yabi Chakha assumed a coronation title Nongda Nongkhanglembi. He went on a pilgrimage just after five days of his coronation to the throne. To redress chaos and anarchy by *Saroi Ngaroi* created in his absence, Nongda Nongkhanglembi prayed to *Atiya Maru Sidaba* (immortal god) for a son. The *Atiya Maru Sidaba* transformed *Taoroi Lai* into Pureilomba, who brought *Nonglum* (cloud egg) in his mouth and presented to Nongda Nongkhanglembi, who became conceived. The story

³ Sudhir believes that those rulers belonged to Mangang clan. Refer Angom Sudhir. (1989). *Yek Taretki Ningthourol*. Imphal.

⁴ Belonged to *Lai-yek* (*Lai* lineage).

⁵ Lailum Kangba (projected foster father of Pakhangba) and king Kangba (who ruled at capital Kangapung) could not be identical. As names with the word Kangba appears on some occasions such as king Kangba, Lairum Kangba, and Nungmu Kangba; it could be that Kangba was a title like *Pakhangba* and *Pureioromba* and so on.

could be an allegorical or mystified presentation of the circumstances that led to the birth of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba.⁶

There are different chronologies of kings from Kangba to Pakhangba. *Leisemlon Ariba* mentions a list of ten kings, namely; Ningthou Kangba, Teima, Tari, Sakappa, Wangkappa, Kaksuba, Tonggomba, Pitingkoi, Lambicha and Sapaiba. *Kangbalon* mentions nine names preceding Pakhangba, namely; Kangba, Kangkoi (Moriya Phambalcha),⁷Kaksuba, Tonkonba, Pitingkoi, Lanbicha, Sopaiba, Puthiba, and Lamayai Nganba. *Ningthourol Seireng* mentions several names fitted into four different *chaks* in succeeding order, namely: (1) *Hayi Chak*—Tangja Lila Pakhangba, Khing-Khing Langba, Sana Khing-Khing Ngangba, Toukai Ngamba, and Muwang Naha Panphaba; (2) *Haya Chak*—Kanglei Piba Apanba (Sentreng), Kuptreng,⁸ Sentreng Ningthou Apanba, Mechisana Leinung Khonba, Khe-Manba-e- Khuman; (3) *Khunung Chak*—Ahong Ningthou Puthiba, Kanglei Piba Kangba Ningthou, Moriya Phambalcha, and Nongdamton Hamu Moiramba; and (4) *Konna Chak*—Lamyaingamba, Ningthou Tari, and Nongda Lai Pakhangba.

According to *Thirel Layat*, in the pre Christian era covering the reigns tracing from Kangba to Puthiba, there were thirty six kings who ruled in different *Chak*, namely; Kangba, Moriya Phambalcha, Pongthanglen Ponghanba, Chengba, Khomei, Kaksa, Wousa, Ngang-Cheng, Miraba, Nungkong Maharaba, Heirongang, Ngangningsing, Ngamba Naha, Leikoi, Nongdamhan and

⁶ *Nonglum* legend could be a mystified allegorical presentation of the circumstances that led to the birth of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba.

⁷ His reign marked the beginning of *Maliya Phambalcha Kumsing* or *Maliyapham Cheichat*. Corresponding date in Gregorian calendar; since puya *Wakoklon Thilel Amailol Pukok* was compiled in 1588 CE, which corresponded to Maliya Phambalcha year 2985, the beginning of Maliya Phambalcha corresponded to 1397 BCE. Refer Ng. Kangjia. (1996). *Kanglei Eyekki Wari*. Imphal.

⁸ Kuptreng and Sentreng were historical personalities. Refer Gangmumei Kabui. (1991). *History of Manipur*. Vol. I. New Delhi: *National Publishing House*. p. 65.

Taohuireng,⁹ Nungmu Kangba, Nunghuireng, Nungtaren, Michaku, Leitangla, Ponglinghanba, Leihingngamba, Keiphaba, Taibangchanba, Machong, Apanba, Sensenba, Chingya Chingmu Ningthou, Mikonhan, Sakapa, Wankakpa, Kaksuba, Tonkonba, Pitingkoi, Lambicha, Sopaiba, Puthiba. Gangmumei believes that most of those were historical figures. He believes, based on *Khangemba Yumlep*, that there were eleven kings between Puthiba and Kuptreng and Sentreng, namely; Tubu Thiba, Loklen Khamellakpa, Khing Ngamba, Sana Manik Khamba, Toukai, Ngamba, Takup Tarangaa, and Tangja Langwon.¹⁰ If there was a political interregnum after Kuptreng and Sentreng, as many would believe, it was applicable to Ningthouja (Mangnag) clan only. Others, such as kings of Khaba-Nganba, continued to rule at Kangla till the accession of Pakhangba.

A. King Kangba:

Kangba¹¹ has been figured out as a powerful and important king. Gangmumei considers him the first king that chronicles had some references.¹² Chongthamcha Nganba believes that he was the first who had fulfilled decorum of a king. Kangba, born in a cave in the Koubru hills,¹³ was the son of Sinbi Leima Leihou Ningthou Chanu and Tangja Lila Pakhangba.¹⁴ He married Leima Taretnu

⁹ The combined oppression by king Nongdamhan (Khommdaon Aton) and his brother Taoheireng, seemed to have increased the burden of oppression on subjects. The oppressed sections represented by Ekma Haotangla (or Haotonglen or Khwai-Nungjeng Piba) of Khwai-Nungjengbam family killed Taoheireng with an arrow, at Maring Khumbirok. Nongdamhan was frightened and fled from the capital. This historical event of a probable raising against oppression, seemed to have been allegorically textualised as the story of *Numit Kappa* (shooting of the sun).

¹⁰ Refer Kabui. *History of Manipur*.

¹¹ Kangba could be a title given to certain kings like that of *Sorarel*, *Pureiromba*, *Pakhangba* and so on.

¹² Refers texts *Wakoklon Thirel*, *Salai Amailon Pukok*, *Leithak Leikharol*, and *Thirel Layat*.

¹³ a place believed to have been the first place of human settlement.

¹⁴ Who is mystified as an incarnation of *Atiya Sidaba* (immortal lord).

of Chenglei clan of Nongmaiching foothills. Different books mention different lineages of Kangba, that is, he belonged to either Mangang¹⁵ or Chenglei. Different scholars suggest different ages for Kangba, that is, while Tensubu fixed it around 1423 BCE Kangjiya fixed it at 1397 BCE.¹⁶

Kangba was the ruler of *Tilli Koktong Laikoilel Hanna Semba Konna Loiba*. His capital was Kanga-pung (mound of Kangba), which later on came to be known as Kangamung or Kamong in present Bishnupur District. His palace must have been built on a mound for various reasons, such as; (1) low-lying nature of the valley, and (2) political and military exigencies. The material culture of his time could be a late Neolithic period marked by *Geometric Ware Culture*, as suggested by archaeological findings that corresponded to his period.

Regarding the composition of people during his time, one can presume it on the basis of interpretation of the allegorical presentation of archaic text such as *Kangbalon*. The text recorded that Kangba had nine sons, who became ancestors of nine different clans¹⁷. It sounds ahistorical. It could be suggesting that there probably were nine principalities or clans that Kangba had ruled upon. The author must have allegorically projected ruler-subject relationship into patriarchal paternalism. If Koikoi, the presumed eldest son had succeeded after the death of Kangba, he might probably have been a progenitor or chief of Pong (predominantly people of Chinese-Siamese origin) who subsequently succeeded Kangba.

He introduced the worship of Lainingthou Sanamahi and constructed a temple. When he became old, the idol of Sanamahi

¹⁵ Mangang; precursor of Ningthouja clan. Kabui. *History of Manipur*. p. 58.

¹⁶ Manipuri era is based on calculation of years from the beginning of the reign of Maliya Phambalcha onwards. If Kangba, as mention in *Kangbalon* and other texts, was the father of Maliya Phambalcha the counting of Manipuri era could have begun from the birth of the latter.

¹⁷ 1. Koikoi became Pong; 2. Teima became Meitei; 3. Yangma became Mayang; 4. Tesarot became Takhel; 5. Uren Khuba became Pathan; 6. Uren Hanba became Moirang; 7. Irem became Pasha; 8. Khaba (Khabi) became Khagi; and 9. Langba became Irangga.

was kept in a cave in Langmaiching Hills. During his reign, dead bodies were exposed in the open, that was picked up by a mythical bird called *Kakyen Mingamba* and dropped it into a river (erstwhile Liwa River) at Heibok. The text *Sakok Lamlen Ahanba* mentioned that the bird was the king of the birds called *Thilpai-ngamba Thinungkhak*. Regarding crime and punishment, crimes of serious nature were punished by fixing a criminal to a flagpole before the temple of *Sanamahi* at *Waroi-ching* (Waroi hill) and exposing the body to the wind. The present township of Kangpokpi was named after a child born to the queen during a royal tour. Kangba reigned for about '460'¹⁸ years and died due to drowning at *Pakhangba Iren* of Imphal River.

II. RISE AND FALL OF PRINCIPALITIES

There were many chiefdoms or principalities in Manipur, such as; Haokha-Lokha, Haoku-Mangang, Haorok-Konthou, Heirem-Khunjan, Heitao-Khangthil, Keke-Nongyai, Khwang-Mungyang, Lera-Khongnang, Manding-Mora, Ningon-Laton, Phantek-Khuyon, Thanga-Kambong, Ulok-Ushai, and so on. They, in due course of time, merged with others to constitute seven major clans, such as; (1) Chenglei, (2) Khaba-Nganba, (3) Angom, (4) Luwang, (5) Khuman, (6) Moirang, and (7) Mangang (Meitei/Ningthouja). These principalities grouped and re-grouped from time to time till their political amalgamation with Ningthouja. After the accession of Mangang ruler Nongda Lairen Pakhangba other clans such as Chenglei and Khaba-Nganba seemed to have lost their independent character. Angoms and Luwangs appeared to have shared political power with Pakhangba, though they ruled independently from time to time. Khumans and Moirangs maintained autonomy till 14th and 15th century respectively though there were occasional interruptions.

¹⁸ This could be forty-six years if properly calculated as suggested by Tensuba in his book *Meitrabak*. Proper use of zero by ancestors in remote past was inconsistent. It could be that 46 was written as either 40+6=406 or 46+0=460

By the end of 15th century hitherto autonomous chiefdoms and principalities were reduced to ethnic/clan status within an overarching Manipuri (Kanglei) Kingdom, retaining their respective socio-cultural identities even to-day.

A. Chenglei

Chengleis appeared to be one of the oldest clans of Manipur. They were known by different names; (1) Thanga Kambong, according to Indramani,¹⁹ (2) Thangyi, from the time of king Thangyi Khonjromba, and (3) Chenglei, from the time of Thangyi Taobung Khongdouba. They were also referred to as Sarang-Leisangthem. Gangmumei believes that due to vicissitudes in their political fortune, Chengleis were divided into Sarangthem and Leisangthem, but under one *Yek* (lineage) known as Sarang-Leisangthem. During the height of their political power Chenglei kingdom was bounded on the north and west by Nambul River and Angom and Meitei principalities, on the south by Wangoi and Waithou, and on the east by Nongmaijing hill.

Chengleiron records the genealogy of Chenglei in a patriarchal descending order, as follows: progenitor Khumkhum Ningthou and Khumkhum Leima Shinbi Leima Leitang Ningthou Chanu gave birth to Ningthou Kangba; Ningthou Kangba and Leima Tari gave birth to Tharang; Tharang and Huimu Leima gave birth to Lokpa, Lamlekshang (*Hao Oiba*), Nungou Yumthangba and Lokton Atonba. *Sagei Salairol* records the genealogical order of the Chengleis in this way; Sumleima gave birth to Nungkareng Nongdamsangba, and Nungkareng; Nongdamsangba and Thangwaibi gave birth to Ha Ha; Ha Ha and Leiri Leima gave birth to Khumkhum Ha Ha; Khumkhum Ha Ha and Khumkhum Leima gave birth to Wan; Wan and Huimu Leima gave birth to Lamlekshang Hao Oiba, Lokpa, Nungou Yumthangba and Lokton Atonba and so on. The first king of Chenglei clan may be regarded as Nungngou Yumthangba.

¹⁹ Refer *Chengleiron*, *Luwanglol Khongun*, and *Nonglon Sakok*.

Thangyi Khongjiromba: Accounts of Chenglei kings started with Thangyi Khongjiromba (Khongji Nunглаiba). Thangyi Khongjiromba was the son of Sara Ngannei and Mangang Ningthou Chanu, daughter of Lemthong Ahongba (Tanthong Ahongpa), a Chief of Mangang of Loijing hills. His five-month pregnant wife Yoikumlon Yaoreiba Chanu was abducted by Meitei king Meidingu Naokhamba (411-428 CE), who made the former a queen.²⁰ The abduction shows the inferior status of Chengleis at that particular point of time. After the abduction, Thangyi Khongjiromba married Penu Leima, daughter of Angom Sorarel at Selloi Langmai hills.

Chingjen Naral Pangalba: Thangji Khongjiromba and Penu Leima had two sons, namely; Chingjen Naral Pangalba and Thangyi Taobung Khongdoubu. Chingjel Naral Pangalba, after being defeated by Ningthoujas, migrated to Mayang Thongnang- (Bodo-Tripuri) country and married Leiri Leisang Khombi, daughter of Pheidri Khongnang. Chingjel Naran Pangalba gave birth to Theibong and Monthei. Theibong was issueless, but descendants of Monthei became Nachou Taba Potsangbam. (Potshangbams of Nachou village).

Thangyi Taobung Khongdoubu: He succeeds Thangyi Khongjiromba. He was also known as Thangyi Chengleipamba. He married Luwang Khuba Chanu Irem Toibi Leima, daughter of Luwang Pakhang Heiroba (Junior Luwang Administrator) and had three sons, namely; Pangthang Ahanba, Yunaoroi Yaimaba, and Kamu Atomba. According to *Chengleiol*, the descendants of Pangthang Ahanba, Yunaoroi Yaimaba and Kamu Atomba became Chengleibam and other thirteen *Yumnaks* (surnames), Leisangthem and seven *Yumnaks*, Sarangthem and ten *Yumnaks* respectively. Not much is heard of the Chengleis as an

²⁰ Naokhamba (411-428 CE) wedded Yaoreiba Chanu gave birth to Naophangba. When a dispute arose regarding succession to the throne after the death of Naokhamba, an ordeal of dipping into water was arranged between Naophang Ahanba and Naophangba, the two half-brothers of the same mother. Naophangba (428-518 CE) won it and became Meitei king.

independent principality after the reign of Meitei king Meidingu Naophangba (428-518 CE). They remained a social unit in Meitei fold.

B. Khaba-Nganba

There are two genealogies of Khaba-Nganba. They are: (1) Atingkok and Taopiroinai (Leimarel Namungbi) gave birth to Arengpa. Arengpa and Heereima gave birth to Tangmaringpa. Tangmaringpa and Mangwaigee gave birth to Leishatao. Leishatao and Mahumnu gave birth to Kantou. Kantou and Hainu Leima gave birth to Tarang Khoinucha, Tarang Khoinucha and Leipirel gave birth to Taoren/ Touren Khaba, and (2) Atingkok and Taopiroinai gave birth to Atongpa. Atongpa and Yaireima gave birth to Pammaringba. Pammaringba and Tungwaipi gave birth to Leikhomtao. Leikhomtao and Mareinu gave birth to Tumla Nganba. Tumla Nganba and Pishannu gave birth to Kurumlen Meinaipa. Kurumlen Meinaipa and Leichik Ningthou gave birth to Nganba Leichik Chikpa. During the heyday of their political power their country was bounded by Khonghampat on the north, Kakwa Lamdaibung on the south, Iril River on the east and Langol hills on the west.

It is mentioned that descendants of Arangpa became Khaba *yek* and those of Atongpa became Nganba *yek*. How these two *yeks* were merged into one *yek* remains uncertain. It is believed that there was an attempt of amalgamation during the time of Tulumba (son of Khaba Yupuroi and Langmai Ningthochanu) and Nganba Khamchinkol Haiheiba and his younger brother Khumuroi Keisaba (sons of Nganba Yupuroi and Puroi Lemnusu)²¹ on behalf of Khaba and Nganba respectively. Sagei Salairol contradicts this

²¹ To construe about amalgamation or brotherhood of two different lineages corresponding to different historical times of Khaba Tulumba and Nganba Khamchinkol would be fictitious or anachronous. Khaba Tulumba was the fifteenth generation and Nganba Khamchinkhong was the tenth descendant from the same legendary progenitor. B. Kullachandra Sharma. (1999). Khaba-Nganba Salaigi Anganba Matamgi Itihas. *Seminargi Khomjinba Warol*. Vol. III. Imphal: Manipur State Archives.

believe as it illustrates that the two clans were separated from the time of Nganba Leichik Chikliba and Khaba Leichik Chikliba who had common progenitor in Mangang-singmit Yoirenba and Leichik Ningthou Chanu. Whatever the case might have been, Khabas and the Nganbas appeared to have settled in the same place for an extended period or both might have been an alliance.

When Khaba-Ngaba emerged into a single political unit, Khabas seemed to have handled administration for most of the time. Perhaps, Khabas emerged as a political unit during the reign of Taoren Khaba. They ruled for a brief period at the present Kangla before the ascendancy of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. The period coincided with various attempts by the ancestors of Poirei Meitei to carve out their territory on the north of Khaba kingdom. Some of the important Khaba kings are being discussed as follows.

Taoren Khaba: Khabas emerged as a political power during the reign of Taoren Khaba and established their political seat at Kangla as the most powerful group at that time before the accession of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. Gangmumei observes that whoever controlled the kangla, both seats of power and abode of religious rites and rituals controlled the destiny of the people of the Manipur Valley. The period coincided with various attempts by the ancestors of Poirei Meiteis to carve out their territory on the north of the Khaba kingdom.

Khaba Leirenhan/Shokchromba: Khabas became very powerful during the time of Khaba Leirenhan/Shokchromba, father of Khaba Tarang Khoinucha. *Panthoibi Khongul* describes Khaba Shokchromba as a powerful king at Kangla. Existing terms or names of places and bridges in our own time, which carry historical meanings, also give an impression of the greatness of the Khabas at a certain point of time. Some of the examples are names of places in and around Kangla, such as; *Phanpham Hiden, Meerapat, Phishukhong, Lam Pheitekpi, Langmeipung, Kanglei Wakhaikon* and so on, which were acquainted with Tampha Panthoibi and Khabas. The Sanjenthong bridge on Imphal River,

situated at the south-east of present Kangla, was frequently used by Khaba-Nganba cowherds in the days of yore. The name *Sanjenthong* was derived from what was known to be *Khaba-Sansen-thong*.

Khaba Tarang Khoinucha: Khaba Tarang Khoinucha was a powerful king. The power and prestige of Khaba seemed to have won the respect of others that Khaba Tarang Khonucha²² was offered to marry Wangamlon Panthoibi.²³ Panthoibi was the daughter of Tubi Thingkok Lairenba who ruled around the ranges of Leimarok at the source of Luwang-yi River. Later on Panthoibi eloped with Kainou Chingsomba of Langmai Ching. Khaba Tarang Khoinucha chased them everywhere across valley and hills, as far as Kabo Valley (now in Myanmar) without resistance from any quarter.

It was during the time of Khaba Tarang Khoinucha and Nganba Khamchingkon that *Sorarel Ariba Ahum* conspired to put Nongda Tupulik,²⁴ on the throne of Kangla. Combined forces of *Sorarel Ariba Ahum* and Nongda Tupulik defeated Khaba-Nganba and their allies and occupied Kangla. It was a contest between the forces of Khaba, a major group of Nganba, and sub-groups of Chakpa and Chenglei under the command of Khaba Tarang Khoinucha on one side and that of Poirei (Meitei), Angom, Luwang and a subgroup of Chenglei under the command of Nongda Tupulik on the other.

Khaba Nongjengba: Khaba Nongjengba was another powerful king of the Khabas. He organised combined forces of Khaba, Nganba and Chakpa. They defeated *Pakhangba* and regained the throne of Kangla. *Pakhangba* sought refuge at Iwang-Moirang, and, with the help of Moirang under the command of Chaoba Soubol (Melleiba/Sanouba), an expert archer, defeated the

²² Son of Khaba Sokchromba.

²³ Panthoibi; an ideal and liberated woman independent of her parents and brothers, but one who could not decline to marry Khaba Tarang Khoinucha.

²⁴ Son of Nongda Nongkhamlembi.

combined forces of Khaba-Nganba and Chakpas. Khaba Nongchenba (Nongjengba), his son Sanggai Telheiba and daughter Kangkam/Kangkum Ichumbi, and many nobles and soldiers were killed. Subsequently, Khaba-Nganbas were dispersed in different directions. Some Khabas surrendered to Angom Pureiromba, and many others were absorbed into others, such as; in the western hills amongst Tangkhuls and Kabuis (Nungnang village), in the south amongst Mahou, and; in the north at the foothills of Koubru to become Khaba Umlen. A Khaba scholar named Khaba Tousuba (Toupaiba) surrendered to Pakhangba, and he was saved. It could be at this juncture that Nganba Khamchinkol went secretly to invite Thongarel, the king of *Khamnang Sawa*,²⁵ to invade the land of *Tai-Pong-Mee*. It could be the fallout of the invitation that had prompted the migration of Poireiton and his horde. After their defeat, Khaba-Nganba and allies could not re-occupy Kangla, though Khaba Tousuba could kill *Pakhangba* in a palace conspiracy. The Khabas were reduced into a social group or a kin group of Meiteis, and, thereafter not much is heard of them politically.

C. Angom

Angom and Ningthouja were closely related and were traditional allies. Almost all the ancient texts state that the Angom and Ningthoujas had their common ancestor and legendary origin. It is believed that the progenitor of Angom and Ningthouja was Konchin Tingthokpa. Konchin Tingthokpa and Leikak Leiyarel Chanu gave birth to Leishanglen Ashangba. Leishanglen and Leishanglen Chanu gave birth to Laitonglen. Laitonglen Atongpa and Leithanglen Chanu gave birth to Leitanglen Lintangshaba. Leitanglen Lintangshaba and Konphu Laiphu Chanu gave birth to Konsourel. Konsourel and Laiyek Laikot Chanu gave birth to Kuptreng and Sentreng. As per *Sagei Salairol*, Angom geneology begins from Khakpa Ningthou Chanu. Khakpa Ningthou Chanu

²⁵ A region believed to be situated at the tri-junction of China, Tibet and Burma

Pureilensu (Leima Tari or Leima Kangkhan) gave birth to Purang and Pureiromba. Purang and Pureiromba came to be known as Kainou Chingsomba Pureiromba and Angou Pureiromba respectively. The descendants of Kainou Chingsomba and Angou Pureiromba became Angoms.

However, many texts such as *Chekkhong* and *Keiroi* state that Laiyek Laikot Chanu gave birth to Kuptreng and Sentreng, who became the ancestors of Angom and Ningthouja respectively. According to Indramani,²⁶ the progenitors of Angom had different names ranging from Purang Pureiromba, Chingwanglakki Pureiromba, Anogouba Pureiromba, and so on. He believes that Chingwanglakki Pureiromba was the son of Ningthou Tari and Leima Kangkhan. Kuptreng and Sentreng were titles, and it was Ningthou Tari who was attributed the title Kuptreng. Illustration in *Sagei Salairol* shows Chingwanglakki Pureiromba was the progenitor of Angom. K.C. Tensuba gives the name of thirty Angom kings from Angouba Pureiromba to Angoupamba Lamphelngamba.

Angom principality pre-existed the ascendancy of *Pakhangba*. If king Angouba Pureiromba²⁷ was not powerful enough he might not have had the capacity to provide refuge to fugitive Khabas who fled their principality after *Pakhangba* had defeated them. At the height of their power, the boundaries of Angom were extended to Nongmajing hill on the east; Ningthoujas on the west; Lamlai, Suisakameng, and Sekta on the north, and; Khuman on the south. Gangmumei believes that Kasom Yongpham/Yongkhul in present Ukhrul district was included in Angom territory on the east. There had been a tradition since the time of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, that at the time of the coronation of Meitei kings, the Angom kings were the first to investiture coronation²⁸. Initially,

²⁶ Refer his book *Penlon Tengtha*.

²⁷ Angom king: a senior contemporary of *Pakhangba*.

²⁸ After the demise of king Tangja Langwon Pakhangba who ruled at Kangla, as per his wish his younger son Sentreng was enthroned. When Sentreng had not returned from a military expedition for long time, the elder son Kuptreng was pressed upon by people to ascend the throne. However, on the coronation day, when Sentreng reappeared, Kuptreng offered the throne

Ningthoujas jointly administered with Angoms, and at times Angom kings were the virtual rulers.

Angouba Pureiromba: Chingwanglakki Ningthou Sorarel Angouba Pureiromba,²⁹ son of Khakpa Ningthou Chanu, is considered the founder of Angom clan. He was one of those rare personalities who assumed the title *Sorarel*.³⁰ Some scholars suggest that he was connected with the birth of *Pakhangba*.³¹ Legend says Pureiromba, under the command of *Sidaba Mapu* (immortal lord), brought *Nonglum* (egg cloud) into his mouth from the *Land of Moon*. It was handed over to Leinung Yabiroka, the mother of *Pakhangba*. Leinung Yabiroka became conceived and gave birth to *Pakhangba*.

The relation between Angom and Ningthouja kings were also marked by hostilities from time to time. Though Angoms had supported the ascendancy of *Pakhangba*, enmity broke out at the time of the migration of Poireiton. Nigthoujas defeated Angoms, and the latter fled to Khamgoi (Khangkhui). It ensued chaos. Later on, Kainou Chingsomba became Angom king, and his brother Angou Pureiromba migrated to Lamlai. Angouba Pureiromba and his third wife Pithetleima Leihou Ningthou Chanu gave birth to

to his younger brother. When Sentreng was reinstalled, he declared that in future coronation ceremony, the king of the clan of Kuptreng would install future kings of Ningthoujas on the throne. According to Longjamcha Sanathoi Piba, Kuptreng and Sentreng ruled jointly. Refer Kabui. *History of Manipur*. p. 65-66.

²⁹ It is doubtful that those Anogom chiefs who assumed the title *Pureiromba* were independent Angom kings whereas those who assumed the title *Angoupanba* were nobles who played a vital role in the administration of the kingdom. However, this theory is not wholly tenable. At many times *Angoupanbas* or Angou were virtual rulers.

³⁰ Angou Pureiromba and Purang Pureiromba were mentioned many times. It is uncertain if those Pureirombas were different personalities of a single person. However, the Pureiromba who was connected with the accession of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba assumed the title Sorarel.

³¹ Others believe that it was Puringlen Pureilomba of Ningthouja lineage who was related to the birth of Nongda Lairen *Pakhangba*. Whatever the case might have been, Angoms and Ningthoujas were closely related.

Khanghal Ahanba, Khanghal Yaimaba/Khangyaimaba and Khamnung Iwangthang/Iwaitthang.

Angoupamba Kwakpa Thawanthaba: Angoupamba Kwakpa Thawanthaba, son of Angoupamba Haosirakki Charanba, fought war with Ningthouja king Meidingu Sameirang (518-568 CE), and lost his life. Longjamcha Sanathoi Piba believes that he was the 20th king of Angom and was not a contemporary of Sameirang.

Angoupamba Kiyamba (1511-1548 CE): Angoupamba Kiyamba, son of Angoupanba Pangsangamba and Mangshangambi, ascended the throne in 1511 CE. He married queen Changning Phabi, mother of Meitei king Meidingu Nonginphaba (1523-1524 CE) in 1524 CE. That year he assassinated the minor king of Meitei named Nonginphaba and his mother, the dowager queen Changningphabi who protested his use of royal egret meant for Ningthouja kings. He became *de-facto* king of Ningthoujas for six generations, namely; Meidingu Koiremba (1508-1512 CE), Lamkyamba (1512-1523 CE), Noingphaba (1523-1524 CE), Kabomba (1524-1542 CE), Tangjamba (1542-1545 CE), Chalamba (1545-1562 CE). He died during the reign of Meidingu Chalamba in 1548 CE.

Even after the death of Angoupamba Kiyamba, Angoms remained highly influential at Kangla as kingmakers. When the throne of Meiteis remained vacant after the death of Meidingu Chalamba chaos prevailed, Angoms offered the throne to Chingayangba,³² son of Leichonlakpa Tolongkhomba Chanu. Chingayangba declined the offer and proffered the throne to Mungyamba, the son of his brother Chalamba. Since then the authority of Angoms declined, and some of them fled to their original place at Langmaiching, to escape from the pressure of Meiteis.

³² Wangkheimayum: descendants of Chingayangba. Regarded as those who could sacrifice throne for the cause of justice.

Angoupamba Lamphelngamba: Angoms were considerably weakened during the time of Meitei king Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652 CE). The last king of Angom might be Angoupamba Lamphelngamba, who ascended the throne in 1693 CE. During his time, Meitei king Meidingu Chhairongba (1697-1709 CE) subdued and absorbed Angoms into Meitei fold. Meitei king Meidingu Charairongba deployed one Kumfen Lanchingba, an expert archer who snatched ‘Sekpin’ of Angom king having nine storeys, the symbol of Angom independence. Since then they became part of Meitei kingdom and remained as a social unit, though they continued to play crucial roles in administrative affairs.

Though the Angoms were acquainted with Meiteis since the time of *Pakhangba*, they had their principality and kings. Gangmumei, however, believes that Angoms had no independent history of its own as they had already accepted tributary status under Ningthoujas. This theory, however, cannot be wholly acceptable. Angoms had their own history and cultural identity. Some scholars believe that those Angom kings who assumed the title *Pureiromba* were independent kings and those who were entitled *Angoupamba* were nobles in Ningthouja court. Here it may be mentioned that Chingwanglakki Ningthou Angouba and Purang assumed the title *Pureiromba*. Angoupanba Kyamba, though he did not assumed the title *Pureiromba*, enjoyed the power and status of an independent king for a long time, not only for Angoms but also for Meiteis. It is true that the title *Angoupamba* was attributed to those Angom kings who enjoyed honoured membership in Ningthouja court. However, the role of Angom kings in Ningthouja court was marked by the sharing of power at Kangla than a subordinate subject.

D. Luwang

Luwang principality was bounded: on the south by Loibu; on the west by Loijing; on the east by Langol Hills, including Lamphel and Luwangsangbam, and; on the north by Koubru Hills. Luwang principality included Lamdeng, Kameng (western),

Mayanglangching, Tera-urak, Chirang, Luwangshangbam, Khonghampat Ching-gon, Sekmai, and Khoirikhul.

Regarding genealogy of Luwang clan, Senkheirel Poireiton³³ is considered the progenitor. Senkheiren Poireiton and Leima Leinaotabi gave birth to Tabung Singmingnaba (Singdabung or Singtapung). Tabung Singmingnaba and Sandong Punemba Chanu gave birth to Arong and Pamingnaba. Arong became Khuman, and Pamingnaba became Luwang. Some scholars believe that Poireiton, Singdabung, and Nungbang Pamingnaba did not enjoy the status of king. Accounts of some of the outstanding kings of the Luwang Salai are as follows.

Luwang Ningthou Khunthiba: According to Luwang genealogy, known as *Luwanglon*, Luwang Ningthou Khunthiba was the first king. He was the son of Nungban Pamingnaba and Huimuleima. Also known as Nungpan Pombi Lu-wangba (Luwaoba), he was the fourth generation on the line of Poireiton. He married Koubaron Namoinu, daughter of Kouba Angangnga of Moirang Anouba. It is believed that his palace was built at Luwang Makubi Ching (Luwang-Ching).

Luwang Ningthou Punshiba: Luwang Ningthou Punshiba, also known as Nungban Hongnem Luwang Punshiba alias *Mitrong*,³⁴ was the son of Luwang Khunthiba and Koubarol Namoinu. He was the most famous of all Luwang kings. Because of *his long life*, he bequeathed with the title *Punsiba* (long life). His name is found in many literary, historical, and religious texts. He was well versed in the art of war, administration, religious matters. During his reign, Luwang principality became the seat of learning in the

³³ Indramani believes, two persons by the name Poireiton migrated to Manipur; (1) Senkheiren Poireiton—younger brother of Thawarel or Thawairel, and (2) Chingkhong Poireiton Khongfang Atonba—brother of Thongarel. Senkheiren Poireiton was the progenitor of Luwang and Khuman. Naoroibam Indramani. (1999). Chenglei Salaigi Anganba Matamgi Itihas. *Seminargi Khomjinba Warol* (Vol.III), Imphal: Manipur State Archives. pp. 44-45.

³⁴ According to Indramani.

fields of war-craft and state-craft. It is believed that Meiteis learnt the art of horse-craft from Luwangs, in which Punshiba himself was a master. According to Meitei text *Hijin Hirao*,³⁵ Punshiba invented the making of the boat. Legend says that one day Punshiba made a stroll on the bank of Singtha River to see whether the *Singnang Pambi* (*Sacharum Procerum*), planted by him were growing or not. It was rainy season and rivers were overflowed. While he was engrossed with a thought about how to cross a flooded river, he saw a strange sight of locust known as *Langban Koujeng Chongbicha* crossing it with the help of a dry branch of *Khikloi* plant (a kind of thatch) in its mouth. After this incident, he ordered his chief artists Nungban Wangmitkhu Khutheiba and Luwang Wangmanao Sinheiba to make a boat. They brought down trees from a hill call *Kouba Ingen Ching*³⁶ and made the first *Hiyang Hiren* (a special boat) ever made for a king. It is also believed that he introduced boat race. He has also bestowed the title *Hongnem*.

The sons and grandsons of Luwang Ningthou Punshiba carved out many small chiefdoms, such as; Heirem Khunjan, Lera Khongnang, Luwang Ingel Ching Tongba, Luwang Langmaiching Tongba, Luwang Phantek, Luwang Phantek, and Luwang Yumlen. After his death, Luwang principality was weakened. Pana, Lainingthouba, Chingjaroi Thabanba and Ningthou Kuraoba succeeded him. After Ningthou Kuraoba, Luwangs were assimilated into a social unit in Meitei fold. According to Gangmumei, there was no Luwang ruler during the reign of Meitei king Yaraba. (799-821 CE). Two chiefdoms Luwang Pthantek and Hairem-Khunjan are being studied as follows.

Luwang Phantek: Luwang Phantek was established by Khoidom, son of Liklabicha Nongdangnu,³⁷ an adopted daughter of Luwang

³⁵ Deals with selection and felling of *Uningthou* tree for boat making.

³⁶ Locates near present Phaidinga and Tengdongyan villages in Imphal.

³⁷ N. Indramani believes: Liklabicha Nongdanu, mother of Khoidom and Mandom, was adopted by Haosiyang Puyangba Chanu, wife of Luwang Ningthou Punshiba. Regarding the parentage of Liklabicha Refer: (1) *Thirel*

Ningthou Punshiba and Haoshiyang Puyangba Chanu. Liklabicha Nongdangnu gave birth to two sons, namely, Khoidom and Mandom, through a marital relationship with Angom chief Pureiromba. The fiefdom of Luwang Phantek was bounded: on the north by Luwang Yumlen and the Meitei Kingdom; on the south by Moirang kingdom; on the east by Loktak Pat, and; on the west by western hills. Its capital was at Khuroi Lamlangtong/Lamangdong. Its rulers were; Khoidom, Phan, Pumingnabakhoi, Tarung, Kaisu, Nanphou (Maphou), Kaimu and Phantek Shokanaiba/ Soknaiba/Soklaiba. Phantek Soknaiba enjoyed the status of a king. He married Khayoiron Haoreima Saphabi, daughter of Khuman Ningthou Chingkhong Thograiba. Luwang Phantek was utterly destroyed during the time of Phantek Soknaiba by a joint force of Khumans and Moirangs. During this time, Moirang was ruled by Moirang Ningthou Ura-Khundaba (130-185 CE).

Luwang Heirem-Khunjan: Lumjeng Ahanba (son of Luwang Ningthou Punshiba) and Yusin Leima Chingnung Haoba Chanu were the progenitors of Luwang Heirem Khunjan. Luwang Heirem-Khunjan was bounded: on the north by Khuman principality; on the south by Tharei (Wangoo); on the east by the Heirolk Hills, and; on the west by Loktak lake and the Moirang Kingdom. Its capital was at Heirem Khere or Kere Ching Khunjan Lalum Thon. Its rulers were; Lumjeng Ahanba, Yumjin, Pana, Pansareng, Toureng Lanthaba, Lairuba, Lou-ba, Lemba Ningthou Chingcharoiba (Chingcharoi Thapanba), Kambong Waiba, Kambong Amukoi, and Haying Khoiya Athouba. Chingjaroi Thapanba was an important king, and Heirem Kangbishu was a famous warrior. During their heydays, Heirem Khunjans made Khumans a difficult time to control the former. However, Heirem Khunjan was utterly destroyed by a joint force of Meiteis and Khumans, during the reign of Meitei king

Meiram Liba, and (2) Indramani. 'Chenglei Salaigi Anganba Matamgi Itihas.' p. 51.

Meidingu Thawanthaba (1195-1231 CE). Later on, Luwang Heirem-Khunjan were amalgamated with Khuman principality.

E. Khuman

Khuman maintained autonomous status up to the 14th century. In the beginning, Khuman territory was an integral part of Luwang-Khuman principality. After the emergence of Luwang and Khuman as separate principalities, Khuman territory was bounded: on the north by Ningthouja territory; on the east by Heirol-ching; on the south by Heirem-Khunjan and southern hills, and; on the west by Loktak lake and Moirang territory. Its territory was more extensive than that of Khuman before the ascendancy of Meitei king Naothingkhong (663-763 CE). Important places covered by Khuman territory were; Thoubal Tomching, Mayang Imphal, Tentha, Khongjom, Wangjing, and sometimes up to Sugnu.

It is generally accepted that the progenitor of Khuman and Luwang was Poireiton. Luwang and Khuman began separation during the time of Arong and Pangminaba.³⁸ The descendants of Pangminnaba became Luwang, and those of Arong became Khuman. Separation into different principalities emerged during the time of Luwang Ningthou Khunthiba³⁹ and Lungba.⁴⁰Lungba

³⁸ Sons of Singtapung and Anthonng Punemba Chanu. Singtapung was the son of Poireiton by Leima Leinaotabi.

³⁹ Son of Pangmingnaba by Huimu Leima

⁴⁰ Adopted son of Tumahanba by Nganuroi Thongngaiba Chanu. Genealogy of Lungba in descending order; (1) *Sagei Salairol*—Poireiton, Singtapung, Arong, Tumahanba and Lungba, (2) *Khuman Ningthourol Lambuba*—Poireiton, Singtapung, Pangminnaba, Khunthiba, Luwang Punshiba, and Lungba; (3) Some scholars—Nganuroi Thongngaiba and Luwang Punshiba were divorced after the birth of sons Lungba and Nungthoingai. Nganuroi became wife of Tumahanba who was issueless, as a result of which Lungba, son of Luwang Punshiba, became Khumn king. According to Indramani, Lungba was a son of Luwang Ningthou Punshiba and his fifth wife Nganuroi Thongngaiba Chanu. He was adopted by Tumahanba, who was issueless.

established his capital at Thoubal. Some of the prominent rulers of Khuman were as follows.

Punshi Yumoiba: Punshi Yumoiba established a good relationship with Meiteis. He gave shelter to Meitei king Naothingkhong (663-763 CE), who subsequently married his daughter Keirunghangbi. He has also gifted a significant chunk of the Khuman country to Meitei king.⁴¹ Those Khumans who were unsatisfied with the decision revolted under the command of Senba Mimaba.⁴²

Senba Mimaba: Senba Mimaba was brought up at the maternal grand father's place, at *Khumanpung*, due to the separation of his parents. His name is not found in *Khuman Ningthourol Lambuba* (Khuman Genealogy), though he ruled Khuman country till his

⁴¹ Interpretation of *Khuman Seireng* by Dr. M. Lokendra: When Meitei king Naothingkhong and his wife Keirunghanbi offered a feast, Khuman king Punshi Yumoiba, father of Keirunahanbi, having satisfied offered to grant anything that the host might ask from him. Punshi Yumoiba, conceding to his daughter demand for a tract of land bigger in size than their own kingdom, gifted a land that would extend from the point of the river where the head of the Sawom (bear) whose meat they had feasted would float to the point where it would stop at Oinam village, a place that came to be known as Oinam Sawompal (Oinam Sawombung).

⁴² Senba Mimaba was son of Luwang Ningthou Punshiba by Khuyoilon Nganuthumbi. He brought Imoinu Ahongbi from Luwang to Khuman country. Once upon a time when Senba Mimaba captured a Sangai (brow antlered deer or *Rucervus eldii eldii*) in hunting, he met his father Luwang Ningthou Punshiba, whose identity the former could not recognise. When Punshiba asked to buy the Sangai, Senba Mimaba replied that he could tag a price only after consulting his mother. On hearing the story, his mother disclosed the identity of Punshiba and convinced him to offer the Sangai in exchange for his grandmother Yumoinu Ahongbi (Imoinu Ahongbi), who was believed to be source of wealth and prosperity. When Senba Mimaba placed the terms of exchange, Punshiba could recognise the identity of his son and conceded to the former's terms of exchange. Accordingly Senba Mimaba brought Imoinu Ahongbi to Khuman country, which subsequently became prosperous. B. Kullachandra Sharma. (1998). *Khuman Ningthourol Lambuba*. Imphal. p. 36-40.

death. Senba Mimaba's name is also not included in the Khuman genealogy based on *Sagei Salairol*. The reason could be that he was a Luwang by origin. Senba Mimaba brought the revered 'goddess of wealth' *Imoinu Ahongbi* from Luwang country to Khuman principality.

Chingkhong Thonggraiba: Chingkhong Thonggraiba, in alliance with Moirangs, invaded Luwang Phantek of Lamangdong and destroyed it. Thonggraiba wedded Chingyai Nganu Chanu and gave birth to five sons, namely; Shiyarong, Purankhnoushiba, Thonghan Thongyai and Laipa. The five brothers became progenitors of several groups of the Khumans.

Adon Yaithingba: Adon Yaithingba was a contemporary of Meitei king Meidingu Ayangba (791-821 CE). In the beginning, his relationship with Meitei king was cordial. However, it became strained, to the extent that a war broke out between the two over a dispute for hunting ground. Meiteis defeated Khumans.

Adon Punshi Khuren Chanba: Adon Punshi Khuren Chanba temporarily improved relation with Meiteis in the early phase of his reign. His daughter Kayoiron Samphabi was married to Meitei king Meidingu Thawanthaba (1195-1231 CE). He married Thawanthaba's daughter Wangamlon Chingkhei Thanbi. However, hostilities broke out between the two kingdoms. Both kings murdered their respective wives, daughters of the enemy, similarly on flimsy grounds. In the war, one of the ablest of the Khuman warriors Khuman Kwakpa Leiton Pamba was beheaded by a Meitei warrior Taria Elangba Athouba. After Adon Punshiba, Khumans were immensely weakened.

Lamyai Kaikhinba: Lamyai Kaikhinba is considered the last independent Khuman king. He was already a weakened ruler. He married Meitei princess Lokhik Momnu Saphabi. After the demise of his queen, Kaikhinba lived in the court of Meitei king Meidingu Kongyanba (1323-1335 CE). Subsequently, Khuman was absorbed into a social group in Meitei fold.

F. Moirang

Moirang, an ancient country, was bounded: on the north by Ningthoukhong, Thanga and Loktak lake; on the east by Turel Achouba (Imphal Turel); on the south by Matarok Turel, and; on the west by Thangjing Hills and Leimatak river.

The first seven rulers of Moirang, from Iwang Puriklai Ngangningshing to Sunu Chariklai Atengpa, are being attributed divine and mythical personalities. Iwang Puriklai Phang Phang Ponglenghanba (52 BCE – 28 CE) is considered the first historical king of Moirang. On the other hand, Ngangningsing was the son of Leinung Ngangsabi by a different husband Tanouba Hing Hing. According to Indramani, the progenitor of *Moirang Ariba* is Ngangningsing, and that of *Moirang Anouba* is Nganghunthok. Nganghunthok was the son of Leinung Ngangsabi, daughter of Nganba Khamchinkol Haiheiba or Urenhanba.

Thirty kings of Moirang, from Ponglenghanba to Sanahongba (1381-1432 CE),⁴³ are regarded independent historical rulers. However, twenty-two rulers of Moirang, from Khenjang Chaiba (1456-1475 CE) to Moirangthem Ramananda (1892-1927 CE), were appointed by Meitei kings.⁴⁴ Not much is known about the rulers of other principalities like that of Khuyol, Ngangoi and Ngangkha, who ruled before the advent of Thangjing Koirel Lai.⁴⁵ Accounts of some of the important rulers of Moirang are as follows.

⁴³ Recorded interregnum period between 1432 and 1892: (1) 1432-1456; (2) 1732-1743; (3) 1767-1773; (4) 1852-1882; and (5) 1888-1892 Ng. Nodia. (1985). *Moiranglon. Yageirel*. VI. Moirang: Thangjing Yageirel Marup. pp. 9-10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁴⁵ Moirangthem Narendra believes: *Khuyol Khunda Ahanba* (Khuyol the foremost habitation) is mentioned but no mention about the early rulers of Khuyol. *Moirang Ningthourol* does not mention much about rulers before Thangjing, but begins Moirang history with the ascendancy of Ngangningshing. Uren Hanba and Langba were absent in the chronology.

Thangjing Koirel Lai: Thangjing Koirel Lai [henceforth *Thangjing*] is considered divine, founder, and protector of Moirang. According to legends *Thangjing* descended from the sky and lived at a hilly abode at Thangjing hills. According to some scholars, he had migrated from the northern tableland of the Manipur valley. The occasion is being described as “[*English translation*] Thangjing Koirel Lai wearing a garland of white flower *Leishang* [a kind of flower found abundantly in Thangjing Hills] on his neck, riding a white horse with an unfolded Pe [*a traditional umbrella*] continued to descend from the high ranges of Thangjing Hills to the lower plains taking the central inter-village route of Khuyol and Ngangkha at the settlement area of Ngagnoï.” The legend continues that the Keges led by Haomuba, son of Iraileima, welcomed him and accepted him as their king. Later on, he settled at Ngangkha village and created the kingdom of Moirang. After that, he communicated with his divine father Awang Pakhang Yoirena.

Gangmumei refers to excerpts from *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* that mentions, that *Thangjing* was a godly king, progenitor of clans and lineages, founder of years, chief of heavenly gods, goal of human souls, chief of western region, vanquisher of Tripuris [Thongnangs], one who travelled in Bengal [*Pangan*] and Mayang country on horseback, chief of Mahui, protector of Mayang-Thongnang, and controller of Monthei. The description shows that *Thangjing* was a controller of many tribes having extensive geographical territory before his arrival at the south-western region of the valley and establishment of the kingdom of Moirang. Some historians believe that *Thangjing* Koirel Lai was a Tai/Lai leader who established a vast area of land from Moria Metropolis in Kabo valley to the borders of Tripura. However, to many *Thangjing* remains a mythological figure.

Ngangningshing Atengba: Some scholars suggest that Ngangningshing Atengpa⁴⁶ was a descendant of *Thangjing*. He

⁴⁶ Genealogy of Ngangningshing in ascending order: (1) Ngangningshing Nghunthok, son of Urel Hanba (Khoriphaba) and Lainung Yuchakha Chanu

united small villages of Moirang to form a principality. He ruled upon seven villages and lived at Khuyon Leikai. He married Yaibi Leima, daughter of Leinung Thongraiba of Nganba clan.

Fang Fang Ponglenghanba (52 BCE to 28 CE): It is believed that with the ascendancy of Fang Fang Ponglenghanba began the history of Moirang. He married a Khuman woman named Mentomnu. He invaded Haorengkok and Kharam Langte villages. He defeated Haoreng Kaiba Ningthou Tangja Sampoktaba and Kharam Langte chief Lanthouyang. A number of adjoining villages were conquered. He constructed his Kangla capital and decorated it with trophies of game and war. He divided Moirang into eight localities and created sixty-four *Phamdou* (post of nobles) for governance. He ruled Moirang for eighty years.

Iwang Telheiba (28 to 78 CE): Iwang Telheiba succeeded Fang Fang Atengba. He pursued military conquest and territorial expansion. He conquered Nungtek village of Puimei and other villages of the trans-Leimatak basin. He also sent a military expedition to the southern side of his kingdom, probably Lokkha-Haokha village. During his reign Ningthouja king *Pakhangba* took refuge in his country when Khaba Nungjengba defeated the latter. He along with his able son (some say nobleman) Chaoba Shonpon Ngamba helped Pakhangba in defeating Khabas and regaining his throne.

Ura Khundaba (130 to 185 CE): The next notable king of Moirang was Ura Khundaba or Ngangoiba. He was son of Laiphangcheng and grandson of Iwang Telheiba. He defeated

Ngangsabi; (2) Urel Hanba, son of Hebu Kangchikap Ngangcheng Leitakpa and Leinung Unaoroi Chanu; (3) Hebu kangchikap, son of Sana Khing Khing langba and Leinung Yupuroi Chanu; (4) Khing Khing Langba, son of Yulourol and Leithamlel Chanu; (5) Yukourol, son of Chucheng (Yucheng) and Leichiklél Chanu; (6) Chuheng, son of Kurumlén Meinaidaba and Leiphurel Chanu; (7) Kurumlén Meinaidaba, son of Nungmu and Chitnu Leima; (8) Nungmu, son of Tumahanba and Chipi; and (9) Tumahanba, son of Ayangba and Thikappi.

Chothes of western hills and Haokha-Lokha of southern hills. During his time, combined forces of Moirang and Khuman invaded Luwang Phantek of Lamangdong and defeated Phantek Shoknaiba. During his time Moirang Kaklen (Kakyel) Athouba killed Nongban Lalloi Taret (seven warriors of Luwang Phantek) for beheading his wife, Haonu Keisi Tombi. The territory of Moirang extended in all directions and exercised authority upon surrounding hill villages.

Thingkri Nachaoba (387 to 447 CE): Puriklai Thingri Nachouba, also known as Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba, pursued military expeditions against Koirengs of Thangjing Hills and Chothe village of Nungshuk and captured Chothe Ningthou (Chief). He is being attributed to as having a connection with mythological figure *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba*, who consorted Leima Sunulembi and ascended the Kingdom of *Sorarel*.

Thiyang Meechaoba (574 to 614 CE): Thiyang Meechaoba launched military expeditions far and wide. He conquered and destroyed Shan village of Pantha in Kabaw valley.

Chingkhu Telheiba (1083 to 1138 CE): The reign of Chingkhu Telheiba witnessed higher achievement of cultural and folk traditions. It is believed that the epic Khamba-Thoibi originated around this time. The epic itself is reflective of well developed cultural life of the people.

Puriklai Punshi Khurel Chanba (1312 to 1381 CE): During the reign of Puriklai Punshi Khurel Chanba warriors of Moirang crossed Ningthi river (Chindwin), conquered Chakpa Menkhom and killed Menkhom Ningthou Thamung Mingnaiba. Many war captives were brought to Moirang and settled at Kwakta. He also defeated Mayang-Thongnang (Bodo/Tripuri) invaders.

Sanahongba (1381 to 1432 CE): Sanahongba was the last independent king of Moirang. He repulsed several attacks by Meitei king Meidingu Punshiba (1404-1432 CE). However,

Meitei king Meidingu Ningthoukhomba (1432-67 CE) in collaboration with Senbi Kabos defeated Moirang. Since then Moirang had been merged into Meitei kingdom. According to Gangmumei, Meitei conquest of Moirang completed the process of the integration of the regional principalities. However, it is worth mentioning that Moirangs, in their heyday, were able to extend their territory far and wide as far as the border of Tripuri kingdom which covered Cachar valley and Tammu in Kabaw valley.

III. RISE OF NINGTHOUJAS TOWARDS AN EMPIRE

Prior to the accession of *Pakhangba*, there were numerous small principalities. The political scenario of the centrally located valley during this time is well illustrated in *Poireiton Khunthokpa* as it allegorically described *Waba*, *Tokpa* and *Sabi*. According to Gunindro, the author of *Poireiton Khunthokpa* had presented some historical events of the time in allegorical terms. The text *Leihou-Nonghou* identified *Waba* with Chenglei, *Tokpa* with Luwang, and *Sabi* with Nganba Khamchingkon. When *Tokpa* (Luwang) defeated *Waba* (Chenglei), *Sabi* (Nganba Khamchingkon) seemed to have frightened and went underground to invite Thongarel⁴⁷ of Khamnung Sawa. It resulted into the migration of Poireiton and his horde.

Sararen Ariba Ahum were frequently mentioned in many texts. Those who were attributed the title of *Sararel* were; *Angom Sorarel* (Angou Pureiromba), *Luwang Sorarel* (Luwang Langmaiba /Panglenhanba) and *Thangyi Sorarel* (Thangyi Sara Puktang or Tharong). However, the power of Thangyi/Chengleis seemed to be weakened due to the growing power of Angoms and Luwangs. Nganbas seems to be weakened considerably as their leader Naganba Kanmchinkol invited Thongarel to invade his enemies. From these instances, it is suggestive that the powerful

⁴⁷ The ruler of *Khamnung Sawa* or the *land of dead*, a subterranean region probably located at the tri-junction of Burma, China and Tibet, situated at a distance of some five hundred fifty kilometres east of Kangla.

principalities on the eve of the ascendancy of *Pakhangba* were Moirang, Khaba, Angom, and Luwangs. There were, most probably, two hostile camps; (1) Khaba, Nganba, some sections of Thangyi and Chakpas were on one side, and (2) Angoms, Luwangs and some section (probably the important section) of Thangyi were on other side. Not a single group of people (belonging to clans) was powerful enough to establish supremacy over the rest. *Pakhangba* had to establish supremacy at Kangla only by winning over rulers of these principalities, and Poireiton and his allies.

A. Emergence of *Pakhangba*

The birth of *Pakhangba* is in mystery. His mother was Leinung Yabirok, but the identity of his father remains obscure. Kullachandra believes that *Pakhangba* was the son of Puringlel Pureiromba of Ningthouja lineage and Nongda Nongkhamlemi (Nongkhanatlemi), daughter of Mairenghouba. Puringlen Pureiromba was the son of Kuptreng and Khakpa Ningthou Chanu Pureilensu. Kuptreng was the son of Konsouren and Laiyek Laikhotchanu. Konsouren is considered a leader of a section of Tai Ngai-Lao people. *Khagemba Yumbi*, *Ningthourel Lambuba* and many other texts give different names of Nongda Nongkhamlemi, such as; Leinung Yabi Yakha Chanu, Ahumnu, Arengba, Chakha Nunglenbi Yoibu Yoihen Saphabi, Chakha Nuroi Pirol Yambi, Leima Ahumlak Tanphangbi, Leinung Yabirok Chakha Nuronbi, Leinungyabi Chanu, Mairenghouba Chanu, Ningthou Ahumlak Panabi, Piritnu, and Yumjao Lairema Oibi, and so on.⁴⁸ Ibohal Singh believes that the real name of the mother of *Pakhangba* was Yabiroka; Yabiroka was a compound word of *Yabi* and *Roka*. *Yabi*, *Chabi* or *Sabi* when stood alone denoted a girl. Her other names denoted the place of her origin, character, personal beauty, valour, and so on. According to

⁴⁸ Irom Amubi. Ningthoukhongjm Khelchandra and others. (1994). Edited. *Sagei Salairol*. Imphal: Manipur State Kala Academy. p. 223.

Indramani, the father of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was Sentreng, who was also known as Lollang Pakhangba.

In fact there were four Pakhangbas, namely; Loimanai Pakhangba, Leinung Lonja (Ariba) Pakhangba, Lolang Pakhangba and Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. Though the first three Pakhangbas were embellished with divinity and mythology, *Pakhangba* is a historical figure, as substantiated by *Cheitharol Kumbaba* and many other texts. According to Gangmumei, later works written by scholars who tried to adduce divine origin of the office of the king and the dynasty founded by *Pakhangba* claimed that he was an incarnation of the divine Pakhangba of Meitei pantheon who was crowned king by his supreme father *Atiya Sidaba* with the machination of the divine mother *Leimarel*, thereby denying the throne to his more capable brother Sanamahi.

Meiteis worship ancestors and revere them as a god. However, the incarnation theory seems to be a borrowing from Hindu religious belief at a later period. As a result every king and great people of the mythological and pre-historical period are being perceived as the incarnation of some gods or goddesses. Naturally, *Shanglen Puba Puya* gives the mysterious or mythical origin of *Pakhangba*. According to this text, Yabirok worshipped *Sun God* for a child who would rule Kangla. Boon was granted. A *Nonglum* (cloud egg) was brought down by *Taoroinai* in his mouth. The *Nonglum* was hatched and *Pakhangba* was born in a village at Hannaching. *Ningthourol Seireng* have a similar version. According to this text, *Pakhangba* was the son of Nongda Nongkhong (Nongkhang) Lemjabi (Leinung Yabiroka) and Khoiyum Nongpok Achiba, who assumed the form of Pureiromba. Puriromba brought down *Nonglum* (egg cloud) in his mouth and gave it to Leinung Yabiroka. After that, Tubi Yoi Nongda was born on a Thursday of Inga (June/July). According to *Khamnung Ingal Leisaba Puya*, the of birth of *Pakhangba* was the 15th day of Inga of Langba Chak year 3108.

Pakhangba Phambal mentions that the mother of Pakhangba emerged from *Chingu Atiya Sidaba*, who assumed the form of *Lairembi Korou Awangbi* and asked *Taoroinai* to carry *Nonglum* (cloud egg) to the earth. *Meihourol Makok Latam* states that *Atiya*

Sidaba wished to create the earth and made out of him *Leimaren Sidabi*, who called *Taoroinai* from the moon to bring down *Nonglum* and to give it to *Leimaren Sida*. *Leimarel Sidabi* came to be known as *Yabiroka*. *Leimaren Naoyom*, *Krakhok Lamlen*, *Leithak Leikharol*, *Nonglon Sakok* and other texts had a similar version of the mystified origin of *Pakhangba*. Some other literary texts described the father of *Pakhangba* as *Luwang Langmaiba* and portrayed *Pureilomba* as his foster father. These legends are in allegorical forms and mystify the origin and birth. It is not surprising that often, founders of kingdoms and dynasties were being mystified to hide their human origin to make them more unique or divine than their subjects.

Pakhangba was brought up under the care of his mother *Yabiroka/Yabirok*.⁴⁹ His mother had wanted him to become king of *Kangla*. She established relationship with *Sorarel Ariba Ahum*. She was *Piritnu* to *Angom Sorarel*, *Areinu* to *Luwang Sorarel*, and *Ahumnu* to *Thangyi Sorarel*. Her political manoeuvring and supports by *Angoms*, *Luwangs*, *Thangyis*, and others helped *Pakhangba* in ascending to the throne of *Kangla*. His emergence into power coincides with the declining phase of *Khabas* who were ruling at *Kangla*. *Angoms* were on the rise. However, anarchy prevailed, and there was the need for a powerful king. *Pakhangba* challenged *Khaba Nongchengba*, but he was defeated. *Pakhangba* sought refuge at *Moirang*. With the help of *Moirang* under the command of *Chaopa Mathipa Sapon Sanoupa* defeated *Khabas*. He also faced the migratory horde of *Poireiton*. According to *Gunindro*, *Pakhangba* confiscated the weapons, belongings, and costumes of *Poireiton*⁵⁰ and his horde on the way.

⁴⁹ His father died (or could be in hiding) early.

⁵⁰ *Indramani* interprets: There were two *Poireitons*- (1) *Senkheiren Poireiton*, progenitor of *Luwang* and *Khuman Salai*, younger brother of *Thawarel*. He migrated with his sister-in-law *Leima Leinaotabi*, in search of land where there would be no death and disease, a peaceful mission without political ambition. He settled at *Landeng*. (2) Another *Poireiton* whom *Pakhangba* confiscated weapons and costumes was *Poireiton Khongfang Atonba* (*Poireiton Tangkhongtek*), younger brother of *Leinung Thongarel*. He was brother of *Laisna* and migrated with his sister-in-law *Leima Leinaotabi*. He

Archaic text *Kangla Layat* says that Poireiton along with Khuman and Luwang leaders attacked *Pakhangba*. However, they were defeated. On this, Thongaren proceeded to Kangla following the upstream of Manipur River via Moirang country with his sister Laisna or Laisra. Laisna was offered to *Pakhangba*. Poireiton reconciled with *Pakhangba* and became a *Khun-Ningthou*. After this, *Pakhangba* emerged as an undisputed power ascended the throne of Kangla in 33 CE. The year of coronation noted in *Cheitharol Kumbaba* is *Kalyabda* (Kali Kumshing) 3135, that is, forty five years before the beginning of *Saka era* in 78 CE.

Before the coronation of *Pakhangba*, the power at Kangla was shared with Angoms and Luwangs. *Pakhangba Phambal* mentions three rooms at Kangla; Angom Pureiromba occupied the rear room, Luwang Langmaiba occupied the front room, and Chingu Langba Apanba Ningthou Sana Tarengba occupied the middle room. The coronation elevated *Pakhangba* to the status of an undisputed king. He ascended the throne with the title *Tubi Yong Nongda Lairen Pakhangba*, and Laisna was the queen. According to *Shanglen Puba Puya*, the ceremony was held at Kangla with due pomp and show on the 1st Saturday of *Kalen* (June/July). The leaders of the four leading clans, namely; Pureiromba of Angom, Khunthiba of Luwang, Ponglahen of Moirang, and Arong of Khuman clan fetched water from *Nongjeng Pukhri* in Kangla and poured on the body of the king and queen.

Pakhangba Phambal records several the ruling in-charge of different directions (*mai kei ngakpa lais*), namely; Koubru Asuppa (in-charge of Northwestern), Hankoi Ningthou (in-charge of the west), Thangwai Marhan (in-charge of North-east), Utin Ukang Ningthou (in-charge of South-west), Wangbren Khana Chaoba (in-charge of the south), Selloi Nungkhoiba Langmai Nunglaoba (in-charge of South-east and east), Chief of Thongnangs,

had political ambition and became a noble in the court of *Pakhangba*. [*Poireiton and Leinaotabi could be titles like Pakhangba and Pureiromba*]. Refer Naoroibam Indramani. (1997). Luwang Salaigi Anganba Matamgi Ithas. *Seminargi Khomjinba Warol*, (Vol. II). Imphal: Mamipur State Archives. pp. 44-45.

Khoimom Korou of Koubaching, and many others attended the coronation. *Kangla Layat* mentions that the occasion was marked by the presence of *Chingburoi* (hill inhabitants) and *Tamburoi* (valley inhabitants) for five days. The presence of almost all important local chiefs, hill village chiefs, nobles, including ten *ningthou pongbas* indicate a consolidation of an empire under the reign of *Pakhangba*, though semi-autonomous and autonomous clans and communities continued to exist from time to time. It marked the beginning of a new era of State building that was territorially extensive and socially inclusive.

B. The initial phase of Consolidation

With the accession of *Pakhangba*, social-economic and political activities were concentrated around the king. Gangmumei observes this process of the evolution of the social, economic and political system of Meiteis should not be projected as a mere narrative of the skeletal political history based on the chronicles. It marked the beginning of the process of consolidation and expansion of the Meitei kingdom. Some of the kings who had significantly contributed to the process are being discussed as follows.

Taothingmang (264–364 CE): Taothingmang younger brother of Yoimongba and son of Khuyoi Tompok ascended the throne in 264 CE. During his reign in 266 CE, Yoimongba appointed *Pibas* (clan chief) of Luang, Khuman, Angom, Moirang and marked their territorial jurisdictions (Hiranya). Remarkable work of Taothingmang is dredging of rivers and change of course of Nambul river to control flood and for the irrigational purpose. The royal brother also killed a giant bird called *Kakyel Meengamba* a terror to the people at that time. Meidingu Taothingmang conquered Haokha-Lokha (Sugnu and its adjoining areas) and expanded his empire. Taothingmang married to Haonukhu, and Khui Ningomba was born to her in 339 CE.

Naokhamba (411-428 CE): Naokhamba expanded control beyond valley in the thickly forested areas of Lairowching (present-day Maram hills). He defeated Chenglei chief Thangji Khongchronba, abducted the latter's wife, Yaoreima Chanu (Mayengbam Chanu), and made her a queen. He also married a Luwang maiden and strengthened the alliance with Luwang. He raised embankments at Yaorei Khunpilok in the upper reaches of Imphal River for the welfare of the people. While dredging the downstream of Imphal River, he was confronted by one Phunan Telheiba, the chief of Phunan principality near the present Lillong area.

Sameirang (518-568 CE): Sameirang suppressed a revolt by Angoms and their king Kwakpa Thawanthaba was killed. It weakened the power of Angoms. Sameireng extended control as far as Maring hills in the south-east. According to Gangmumei, the recent discovery of a stone inscription in the Maring village of Khoibu established the conquest of the Maring hills by Sameirang and his brother Thamanglang, though it is stated to have erected at a later period by some scholars. The inscription is suggestive of the maintenance of a deity at Khoibu village, which was a military out-post installed by the orders of Sameirang and his brother Thamanglang.

Naothingkhong (663-763 CE): Naothingkhong defeated Mangangs led by their chief Mangang Kon-Khucha Atengba of Loijing Phouoi-ching (a portion of Koubru-Laimaton range).⁵¹ Since then he came to be known as *Mangang Ngamba* (conqueror of Mangang). Mangangs were subsequently merged with Poirei-Ningthoujas. Naothingkhong also defeated Thanga Kambongs, a prosperous community settled in the western portion of Imphal valley. During his reign, Samlung, brother of Ahom king Sukanpha (Sukapha) from Upper Assam visited his empire and

⁵¹*Ningthourel Lambuba* describes the Mangangs (of that time) as a *Hao* inhabiting the western hills.

stayed at *Nongpok Ingkhol*⁵², and they became friends.⁵³ Naothingkhong had eight sons namely Khongtekcha, Makumpa, Thingnang, Shangkal, Chempa, Naril and Khopa. The immortal love story of Nongmai Petanga and Naothingkhong is still narrated.

Khongtekcha (763-773 CE): During his reign, Moirangs attacked capital Imphal. Khongtekcha repulsed Moirang invaders and killed many of their nobles and warriors. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* mentions that 63 of them were killed. Thereafter he subdued many hill villages. Mention may be made of (1) Chingshong Tangkhul Village. (2) Mahou village and killed its chief Thawa Langjeng; (3) Irong and Langtha villages in the north, (4) Arong and Langmaithel villages in the west, and brought many captives, and (5) Shelloi Langmais and many other tribes. He married Pukeirembe. Kongtekcha ruled the country with the assistance of his sixty-four-nobleman known as *Phamdous*. However, he along with his sixty-four *Phamdous* met a tragic end by drowning while hunting a deer at a place called Langja Loupungphei a place lying between north of present Kabo Leikai and south of Chingmeirong.

Loiyumba (1074-1122 CE): Loiyumba was a great administrator, reformer and conqueror. According to *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, Loiyumba organised his kingdom into six divisions known as *Lups*. They were *Luplel-lup*, *Thouja-lup*, *Kongcha-lup*, *Lupkhuba-lup*, *Chingja-lup* and *Khaija-lup*.⁵⁴ He codified division of labour on the basis of *Yumnaks* (surnames). The system came to be known as *Loyumba Shinyel*, that is, a royal edict for the socio-economic organisation of his empire. Loiyumba subdued Chakpas

⁵²Also known as *Pong Inkhol*, situated on the east of Kangla. Meitei term for Kabo Shans is *Pong* and the place where Samlungpha stayed came to be known as *Pong* or *Apong Ingkhol*.

⁵³There is a controversy over the date of the visit of Samlungpha (brother of Ahom king Sukapha) as the Ahom king Sukapha ascended the throne only in the year 1228 CE.

⁵⁴*Lup* could be former term for *Pana*, the latter term might have been adopted from Shans.

and defeated their leaders Chakpa Tao and Angkemtao of Sekta. He re-conquered Haoku and captured Haokurang and Santhiba. He defeated Leihou king Khomarengba.

Thawanthaba (1195-1231 CE): Thawanthaba entered into matrimonial alliance with Angoms and Khumans. He married Langmaibi of Angom clan and Saphabi, daughter of Khuman king Punshi Khurenchanba. His daughter Tampha Chingkheithambi was married to Khuman king. However, hostilities broke out between the two and many Khuman warriors including the famous Khuman Kwakpa Leiton Pamba were killed. Thawanthaba subdued many hill villages. He invaded; (1) Tankhul village east. According to Gangmumei, Thawanthaba kept his empire more unified.

Puranthaba(1247-1263 CE): According to *Ningthourol Lampuba*, Puranthaba was called Poirei Ningthouhanba before he adopted the name Puranthaba. He entered into hostilities with Khumans. The immediate result was his revolt against his half-brother Meidingu Thingbal Selhiongba (1242-1247 CE) and the latter's refuge in Khuman country. Thingbal Selhiongba took the support of Khumans and waged war against Puranthab. Battles were fought at Poiroi, in which Khumans were completely routed, and wholly weakened. Puranthaba also fought against Chakpas at Khongchi Yainarok and captured Chakpa Khongchi Maningthou, Arok Akhuba, and Athing Ayang. He subdued Kouba Koutai after defeating them at Awang Kouba Leikhampok.

Khumomba (1263-1278 CE): The reign of Meidingu Khumomba witnessed invasion by powerful forces from beyond the imperial landscapes of Manipur. Senbi-Kabo (Kase-Shans) invaded Ikop pat region of Khuman principality. They threatened several autonomous principalities of Khumans, Haokhas, Chairens, and Khunjans. At this juncture, Khuman king invited Ningthouja to their principality. A war was fought at the banks of the Ikop pat in which the Shans were defeated and repulsed. From this battle

onwards Khuman became a protectorate principality under Meitei regime, to defend from invasions.

Kongyamba (1324-1335 CE): The reign of Meidingu Kongyamba witnessed invasion by forces from the west beyond the imperial landscapes of the Meiteis. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* describes the invaders *Mayang*; whereas *Ningthourol Lambuba* describes them as *Thongnang*. They were defeated at the battle of Ingenching (Hinglan ching) and captured Mayang Maiba Samloiba, Apheraja Thangyan Kanba, Tingkaraja Wasakpa, Lakasum Tao, and Aring Arang Tao. Kongyamba also defeated Chakpas of Langmangdong.

Punshiba (1404-1432 CE): Meidingu Punshiba defeated; Thanga-Kambongs and Moirang chief Yakhusu, Tangkhuls of Monthou and Kaihou villages, Koireng of Koubru Hill, and invaded Maring Kangoi hills. From this time onwards Chengleis or Thanga Kambong lost their separate political entity and were absorbed into Ningthouja kingdom. His reign showed the extension of empire into interior hill areas of the surrounding hills covering vast areas of the present Manipur.

Ningthou Khomba (1432-1467 CE): Two significant occasions marked the reign of Meidingu Ningthoukhomba. The first was the invasion of a Shan principality at Tamu. The second was the defeat of the Moirangs. Ningthoukhomba attempted an expansion of his empire beyond the present geographical boundaries of Manipur. Military expeditions were sent against the Shan principality of Tamu between 1432 and 1443 CE. In the expedition that ensued the queen of the Shan chief of Tamu was killed. The principality of Moirang which remained autonomous though they attended the coronation ceremony of Pakhangba was also invaded. Being defeated the Moirangs presented *Leisang* creeper as a tribute to Ningthoukhomba. Mention may also be made of his expedition to Akla Chingtombi inhabited by Kabo Shans in the eastern frontier of Manipur in the year 1443 CE. The Kabo Shans were defeated, and many of them were killed and

captured. A remarkable event also occurred during his reign when he was away from the capital to subdue the revolt of the Akla. Taking this advantage, the Tangkhuls from the east revolted to usurp the throne of Manipur. However, the revolt was subdued under the command of queen Linthoingambi who dressed as the king and fought. In the fight that ensued, the Tangkhuls were defeated at Tengkhams village, a place situated some 12 kilometres north of Kangla and their chief Hempuring was captured.

C. Empire and Expansionism

Thangwai Ningthouba (Kiyamba) ascended the throne in 1467 CE. It opened up a new chapter of the adventurous phase of expansionism towards invading or conquering powerful forces lying beyond the geographical space of present Manipur.

Thangwai Ningthouba (Kiyamba) (1467-1508 CE): In 1469, a combined force of Thangwai Ningthouba and *Sawbwa*⁵⁵ Khe Khomba of Pong invaded and conquered Kyang, a Shan principality in Kobo valley (now in Myanmar). From this event, the Thangwai Ningthouba came to be known as Kiyamba, that is, conqueror of Kyang. Pemberton believes that the king of Pong had crossed *Ningthee* or *Kyendwen* (Chindwin) River, at the head of a considerable force, and entered Kobo valley. He was joined by Meitei king and besieged Khumbat after an obstinate defence.⁵⁶ The two kings divided Kyang and demarcated their boundaries with stone pillars.⁵⁷ Thus, Kiyamba extended the boundary of his empire beyond the Chindwin River upto Loichari Tilal on the east.

⁵⁵Meitei term *Choupha* or *Chaoba* corresponded to designated title for chief of Shan or king of Pong (Shan in Upper Burma).

⁵⁶R. Boileau Pemberton. (1997). *Report on The Eastern Frontier of British India*. Guwahati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies. p. 118.

⁵⁷ Boundary demarcation was executed under the supervision of the two kings by their respective high officials, namely; Thoucharup Lakpa Khwai Leisang Khomba representing Kiyamba and Leipuba Chakpak Tede representing Khe Khomba. Engraving on the stones were done by one Maichou Thangkang Chanba.

Since then, the Shans under the dominion of Ningthouja king came to be known as *Kase* or *Kathe Shan*. The two kings also agreed upon to delineate the boundary of Kiyamba's empire as far as Takhel.⁵⁸ Pishakhao on the south, Sibsagar on the north and Cachar Malugram on the west.

Another remarkable event during the reign of Kyamba was the invasion of Mayang-Thongnangs from beyond the west in 1504 CE. They might have been Bodo group of people like *Timafi-cha*, *Tima-cha* who were known as *Kacharis* and *Tripuris*. According to *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, many brave warriors and noblemen including a prince were killed while defending their kingdom. Mayang-Thongnangs were defeated, and many of them were captured.

Mungyamba (1562-1597 CE): Mungyamba strengthened control over the subdued Shan principalities. In 1565 he invaded Senbi Mungkhong and Kabo Mungyang on the eastern fringe of Kabo valley. He captured several guns, a golden replica of a cock and five chiefs including two with the title of *Chaopha* (*Sawbwa* in Shan), namely; Chaopha Mangtra and Chaopha Womsing. It is also said that he defeated many other Shan chiefs, including Shan chief of Akla. In 1571 and 1582 Samjok (Thangdut) was shacked. In 1578 Khamran was fixed as the boundary of his empire and Shan States. He conquered Kyang and Shan Yathek in 1597. In 1594 he subdued Anals and captured its chief Sinthouba. He also defeated the chiefs of Maram, Thangal, Koireng, and Liangmei villages in the northern and western hills. In the South-eastern hills, he defeated many villages of Moyons, Chakpas, Ningens and

⁵⁸ "To the Manipuris the whole country under the ancient limits was, and is still, known as the kingdom of Pong, of which the city called by the Burmahs Mogaung, and the Shans Mongmaorong, was the capital. The people generally called Kabo, and distinguished them, as they were dependent on Manipur or Ava, by the terms Meitei Kabo or Ava Kabo, which expressions are synonymous with the names Kasi Shan and Merlap Shan, applied by Burmahs to the same people and country." R. Boileau Pemberton. *Report on The Eastern Frontier of British India*. P.113.

Anal. In the south, he raided the villages of Tuiyai (Tuivai). Thus, towards the end of the 16th century Mungyayamba consolidated and expanded his power not only within those that are within but also far beyond the present boundary of Manipur.

Khagemba (1597-1652 CE): Khagemba was previously known as Ningthouhanba. He conquered and annexed many principalities in Kabo valley, namely; Samsok, Tamu, Kyang, and Kumbat. It is said he came to be known as Khagemba, that is, “conqueror of Chinese,” after he had defeated *Khagis*.⁵⁹ There are different views about the ethnicity of those *khagis* defeated by Khagemba. The most common view is that they could be people from Yunan province of present-day China, neighbouring Shan kingdoms. According to Gangmumei, those people could be a marauding horde of Chinese who had strayed into the trans-Chindwin basin, and Khagemba who had been campaigning in Kabo Valley had come to know of their encroachment and had defeated them. Gangmumei’s view is not convincing. Usually, no titles were assumed after defeating encroachers. Titles were usually after the conquest of villages, principalities, kingdoms, and so on. It is more likely that those whom Khagemba had defeated were non-other than Yunanese-Chinese. Another significant occasion of Khagemba was a collision with the Burmese empire. Perhaps, the Burmese empire under Toongoo dynasty, in pursuit of its expansive vision, in 1648 and 1651, had attacked the Shan principalities under Khagemba’s rule. Khagemba defeated and repulsed the invaders. He repulsed a joint invasion by Kacharis and Muslims in 1606. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* mentions a fight against Mughals on Gwai (Barak) River in 1615. He also subdued several hill tribes, who had been either unconquered or loosened.

Garibniwaz (1709 –1748 CE): Garibniwaz, also known as Thongnang Mayamba, was perhaps the greatest. According to Gangmumei, “During his long reign of forty years, Manipur had attained the zenith of her glory, military, religious, cultural and

⁵⁹*Khagi* is *Meiteilon*, term for Chinese.

literary.”⁶⁰ He was the greatest conqueror, though controversial for his religious policy. He patronised *Vaishnavism* and initiated mass conversion into Hinduism. Between 1710 and 1717 CE he was more concentrated on consolidation of his empire and tightening of administrative grips over his territories, subjects and recalcitrant sections. About his military expeditions or conquests,

It appears that Garibniwaz had entered into collision with Burmese empire partly as a war of attribution but more to fulfil his adventurist quest of expansionism. In 1714 a Burmese marriage party comprising of three hundred nobles, soldiers, men, women and children were to receive a Manipuri (Kanglei) princess at the confluence of Chindwin and Ru (Yu) Rivers. Garibniwaz’s soldiers under the command of one Usham Koren Keirungba, in the guise of a marriage party, attacked and defeated the Burmese. In the meanwhile, the policy of expansionism that was pursued following the accession of Tanninganway (1714-1733 CE) of Toongoo dynasty to the throne of Burma in 1717, naturally brought the two expanding empires into collision. When the Burmese tried to occupy Kabo valley, they were defeated by Garibniwaz at the Shan villages of Laibu, Thokep Loupanthong, Muwang, Heining, Chanda Khulel, and Songsak. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* mentions seven military expeditions against Samjok (Thangdut) in 1717, 1718, 1720, 1737, and 1748. *Samjok Ngamba* provides more details of these expeditions. The Burmese invasion in 1718 was defeated at Khoukep Loupanthong. In 1723 CE Garibniwaz repulsed attack from two fronts, namely; from the east by Burmese, and from the south-west by Tripuris.⁶¹ Both the attacks were repulsed.

Garibniwaz carried out series of offensive military ventures; invaded and defeated Tripuris in 1727 and 1733, invaded Burma in 1724, 1725, 1735, 1738, 1740 and 1741. During the invasion of 1735, Garibniwaz crossed Chindwin and destroyed the town of Myedoo on the bank of Moo River within Shwebo Province of Burmese Empire. The conquest of Saigang city on the Irrawaddy,

⁶⁰ Kabui. *History of Manipur*. p. 238.

⁶¹ The Tripuris were under the command of their general Chhatrajit Narayan.

off the capital of Ava in 1738⁶² was the most significant military success ever achieved by a Manipuri (Kanglei) King. Harvey transcripts a memory of the invasion, “In 1738 when the king garrisoned these two places [*Myedu and Tabayin*] and Mingin in the Upper Chindwin district against them, they [*Garibniwaz’s force*] simply cantered past, camped at Thalunbyu west of Sagaing, burnt every house and monastery up to the wall of Ava, and stormed the stockade built to protect the Kaunghmudaw pagoda, slaughtering the garrison like cattle in a pen and killing the commandant, a minister of the Hluttaw Council; the old doors leaves of the pagoda’s eastern gateway show a gash made by the sword of Garibaniwaz when he was forcing an entrance.”⁶³ Desai reproduces an oral account of the precautions undertaken by Burmese emperor to defend from Meitei expansionism, “In the reign of Mahadhamayaza Dipti (1733-52) the capital was moved from Pegu to Ava. The object was to guard more effectively the northern frontiers from the eruptions of the Manipuris, Arakanese and Chinese.”⁶⁴ Chindwin River was the boundary of Burmese and Manipuri empires. Manipuri empire reached the zenith of its might and consolidation in present South-East Asia during the reign of Garibniwaz.

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⁶² During the reign of Burmese king Mahadhamma Yaza Dipati.

⁶³ G.E. Harvey. (1925). *A History of Burma*. London: Frank Cass And Company, Limited. p. 208.

⁶⁴ W.S. Desai. (1961). *A Pageant of Burmese History*. Bombay: Orient Longmans Ltd. p. 85.

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Administration from Earliest to Democracy (33-1949 CE)

Present Manipur is a geographical space, whereon waves of migrants had established permanent 'homes' and had organised themselves into viable economic, social, and political institutions. If holistically seen from today's perspective as a composite organic entity, this geographical space was a common material premise of various forms of polities; tribal republics, semi-feudal chieftainship, federations and confederations, monarchy, empire, colonialism, constitutional monarchy, and so on. Any community of people thriving on this soil could not be unattached from organised material livelihood, which naturally brought into play his conscious or subconscious role in the polity. Perhaps, all pre-literate or archaic societies and mystic people had organised themselves into conducive organised systems for survival and comforts of life, without which it would have been impossible for them either to migrate in hordes by overcoming challenges posed by nature and enemies or to settle and establish themselves as a stable unit of community.

Administration in the loose sense of the term, *i.e.*, systematic organisation of division of labour, duty, conduct, and order was a natural necessity; though institutional forms and contents may have varied across different times, spaces, and contexts. Throughout the entire course of history, the people who inhabited 'this' geographical space were organised into one form of polity or other. Depending on the stage of development, which might have corresponded to either historical phase of migration or topography of settlement or both, a community of people was organised into either a tribal polity or a monarchical institution. However, there were no strict walls between the two systems, as social intercourses and other forms of the transaction were not shut down. There also existed social mobility marked by either individual or group flight of fugitives who merged into tribal polity or tribal segments absorbing themselves into materially advanced society under the monarchy.

Interestingly different polities, such as tribal and monarchy always co-existed, though the expansionist phase of Manipuri (Kanglei) empire was illustrative of bringing all those defeated and loyal subjects under different degrees of subjection. The British could not immediately wipe them out; they found it more economically lucrative to perpetuate both tribal polities and monarchy under 'modern' colonial polity. Constitutional monarchy after the collapse of British rule incorporated elements of tribal polities under an overarching federal constitutional structure.

I. OMPHALOS OF MANIPURI (KANGLEI) EMPIRE

The present valley of Manipur was the *omphalos* of Manipuri (Kanglei) empire, and, a *centralised monarchy thriving on the feudal mode of production* was its driving force. Regarding the ancient past, the actual degree of centralisation of administration and revenue collection across an extensive territorial area encompassing the entire geographical area of present Manipur and beyond is difficult to point out due to lack of information. However, one can be sure about an attempted centralisation, which might have logically been more effective in and around the core area of the capital Kangla. The character of centralisation peculiar to any ambitious and powerful king could be interpreted from few available literary sources. Before going further, the use of the phrase a *centralised monarchy thriving on the feudal mode of production* to denote Manipuri (Kanglei) empire may require a brief elaboration. First, the *centralised monarchy* is meant to refer to the system centred on the king as the ultimate authority of all socio-economic and political activities of the territory he ruled upon. Second, feudalism is meant to denote the relation of production in which collection of revenue and payments were transacted predominantly in the form of a kind, labour (services) and land. Gangmumei believes that feudalism was an economic and political system presided over by the king and administered through nobility which supervised the ownership and possession

of the land. The functioning of *Pana* system¹ (administrative units), *Loishang* (department), *Lallup*² (obligatory labour without payment), *Pothang*,³ *Yumnak Mashil* (surname wise assignment of work), etc. was a clear manifestation of a *centralised monarchy thriving on the feudal mode of production*. The author traces the genesis of this system in the ascendancy of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (33-154 CE). The coronation of Pakhangba was attended presumably by elders, representatives, chiefs or kings across the ‘contemporary’ territories or clans or community boundaries. The attendance might not necessarily be a sign of fealty to Pakhangba, but those were indicative of ‘voluntary’ recognition of his leadership or sovereignty or sovereignty as it might have been selectively applied to different sections of people. In the absence of exact accounts of the actual forms and extent of extraction of revenue or labour, it is equally challenging to point out the level of feudal system prevalent then. However, Pakhangba had shown the seed of centralisation of administration and expansion of Manipuri (Kanglei) empire, which became more illustrative several centuries later, during the reign of Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652 CE).

a. Hill Administration

The politics of our time had influenced many towards contentious interpretations of *past* to the extent that good academic works had been overshadowed by the thick clout of exaggeration and

¹ Nongda Lairen Pakhangba established administrative *lups* (units), namely; Lailup, Ahallup and Nahalup *Shanglens*. The number of *lups* were increased to six during the time of Meidingu Loiyumba, namely; *Luplenlup*, *Thoujalup*, *Kongchalup*, *Lupkhubalup*, *Chingjalup*, and *Khajjalup*. *Lup* might be the former name of *pana*, which is believed to be a Shan word.

² *Lallup* was a system, making every male, between the ages of seventeen and sixty, serve free labour to the king for ten days in every forty days.

³ *Pothang* was two kinds, namely; *Pothangbekari* and *Pothangsenkhai*. *Pothangbekari*: compulsory free portorage for royal dignitaries, nobles, state officials while on tour. *Pothangsenkhai*: compulsory households’ contribution in cash or kind to feed touring official.

anachronous polemical propaganda literature. Today, there are two contentious schools of thought that are at loggerhead while advocating twisted histories to fulfil their respective agenda. One belonged to the *school of dichotomy* that projected the hill and valley had always been separated from the long past. Other belonged to the *school of homogeneity* that always tried to depict a unified Manipur from the time immemorial. Both turned out to be *reductionist* in approach in so far as their methodology of rejecting constructive criticism, and selective omission of historical facts are concerned. They create and misplace history in the most anachronistic form that the *past* become a victim of manipulation and misinterpretation. To write about hill administration during ancient past may be presumptive. To neglect altogether would be equally an insult to the discipline of historiography. To club all village communities into the tribal mode of production and summing up with a readymade conclusion by sociological summaries of 'remote societies' elsewhere would be an oversimplification without context. The only option lying before the author is to try re-interpreting legends, traditions, and collation of slight references in texts that are hardly sufficient to explore the *past* in the most real sense of the term.

It cannot be doubted that hill village communities were not immune from an expanding empire that could invade well-established kingdoms lying beyond the mountain ranges where the former were inhabiting. The history of different phases of migration and social intercourses has shown that the hill villages were accessible from different directions. The point is to differentiate conquest from the administration, though the former could be an important factor for the extension of the latter. On the other hand, there could be a peaceful extension of administration or sovereignty or suzerainty or absorption or assimilation by the framework of *voluntary unionism* because of historical factors. However, both the conditions hardly provide a description of administration in the modern sense of the term. The difficulty lies in trying to explore the *modus operandi* as to how hill village communities fitted into the imperial landscape of an expanding

Manipuri (Kanglei) empire, particularly from the expansive period of the reign of Khagemba onwards. Perhaps, Khagemba has been credited for an unprecedented scale of centralisation and expansionism within and beyond the present boundaries of Manipur. He was successful, most probably because of the following reasons; (1) He possessed superior war instruments, numerically strong and organised offensive forces, surplus resources to utilise in the engagement of conquest, (2) Hill village communities were numerically inferior and lacked in organising themselves into a united front. Mataisang says, "In the olden days, almost every tribal village was socially isolated from its neighbouring villages even within the same tribe because of their warring nature. Their villages were generally set up on hilltops, which command an extensive view of all the approaches to the village and were defended with ditches, stone walls, thorn fences etc.."⁴ (3) Khagemba had loyal supporters across communities who had long established shared socio-economic and cultural livelihood over a span of centuries. Consolidating hill village communities would mean taking over the responsibility of protection and defence in lieu of revenue collected either in the form of service or kind. The question is; how did it work out?

There are indirect references that lack descriptions about functional aspects and continuity overtimes. Exact community composition and geographical coverage of those likely to be affected by referred institutions such as *Haomacha Loishang*, *Lallup*, *Pothang*, and *Yarek-Santri* could not be exactly ascertained. However, these institutions certainly existed and functioned. These may be briefly discussed as follows:

Haomacha Loishang: This institution has been literarily translated as Department of Tribal Affairs. Gangmumei believes that it was established during the reign of Charairongba (1697-1709 CE) to regulate administrative

⁴ Mataisang., Ng. (1999). Pre-Colonial Tribal Society of Manipur. In Dr. Kamei Gailangam and Dr. Gina Sangkham. Ed. *Change and Continuity in the Tribal Society of Manipur*. Canchipur: Manipur University Tribal Students Union. p. 2.

affairs of ‘hill tribes’, and his Pamheiba (Garibaniwaz) was put in charge of it. Khelchandra, however, suggests that Charairongba had only reorganised the *Loishang*, not found it.

Lallup: Hill areas adjacent to the valley were administered in almost uniformity with that of the latter. The people were subjected to *lallup* system. Those who lived in the farther distance were administered under a two-tier administrative setup. At the first level, those under the direct control of their respective *Ningthous* or *Khullakpas* had to render service regularly to them. It may be mentioned here that there was hill village upon whom *Khullakpa* or *Ningthou* had limited authority and *lallup* system was not enforceable on them. At the second level, the people were obligated to serve the empire additionally, such as; participating in military campaigns, and hunting expeditions, supply labour for *pothang*, *Yarek Santri* for visiting state officials, cutting timber, and so on. Fulfilling these obligations enabled hill village *Khullakpas*, *Khunbus* or *Ningthous* to enjoy autonomy without interference from Manipuri (Kanglei) kings.⁵

Designation: First, Meitei *lambus*⁶ were assigned to various official duties in the hills. In *Loiyumba Shinyel*,⁷ the role of *Lambu* is mentioned as being involved in the settlement of a land dispute.⁸ During the reign of Ningthoukhomba (1432-1467 CE), a *Lambu* was in charge of Chakpa named Konkhang. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* mentions a reference of it

⁵ Applicable to several pockets in the valley as well.

⁶ *Lambus*: literally in-charge of land, were later on officials who looked after administration in hill villages. *Pakhangba Phampbal* mentions *Lambu* at the time of coronation of Pakhangba.

⁷ *Loiyumba Shinyel* is an official division of labour along the lines of yumnaks (surnames), proclaimed by King Loiyumba in 1110 CE.

⁸ Chandrasekhar., Khullem. and Sanajaoba., Naorem. (1988). Ancient Meetei Written Constitution Loiyumba Shinyen. In Naorem Sanajaoba. Ed. *Manipur Past and Present* Vol. I. Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 302.

during the time of Garibniwaz.⁹ Second, several Meitei titles were adopted in hill village communities, such as; *Ningthou* (king or chief) and *Kkullakpa* (village administrator or in-charge of the village). According to Lambuilung, there was one chief in every village to whom the Meitei title *Khullakpa* was given. Gangmumei asserts that offices like *Mantri*, *Senapati*, and *Meitei Lambu* were introduced and other villages copied them. To cite an example, *Kullakpa* and other subordinate office bearers were introduced in Anal areas and among Tangkhuls, Maos and Kabuis.¹⁰

b. Valley Administration

The ascendancy of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba heralded many changes in the administration. The capital was divided into four *Panas* (divisions),¹¹ namely; *Ahallup Pana*, *Naharup Pana*, *Laipham Pana*, and *Khabam Pana*. Observing his pattern of governance, administration of the valley may, therefore, be categorised into two areas, *i.e.*, core and periphery (outlying villages). The administration of the core area was organised into inner core (capital) and outer core. The area of the inner core was covered by four Leikais, namely; *Khurai*, *Wangkhei*, *Khwai*, and *Yaiskul*. Each of these Leikais was placed under the charge of a *Lakpa*. On the other hand, the outer core was segregated into *Ahallup*, *Naharup*, *Laipham* and *Khabam Panas* (Divisions). However, Indramani stated that the four Leikais also came under the purview of the one of the *Panas*. R.K. Hiranaya stated that Pakhangba established *Kuchu Shanglen* for the effective administration of justice. He further asserts that *Loiren Yakapung*

⁹ Ibingohal., Lairenmayum. and Khelchandra., Ningthoukhongjam. Ed. (1989). *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. Imphal: Manipur Sahitya Parishad. p. 88.

¹⁰ Kabui., Gangmumei. (1985). *Anal: A Trans-border Tribe of Manipur*. Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 30.

¹¹ Some scholars believe that *Pana* was a later interpolation preceded by the use of the term *Lup*. To them the term *Pana* came into use since the time of Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652 CE) and became prominent during the time of Meidingu Garibniwaz (1709–1748 CE).

is another institution for holding an assembly at the top level as indicated by the name of the institution itself

Significant administrative changes occurred during the reign of Khuyoi Tompok (154-264 CE), the son and successor of Pakhangba. Khuyoi Tompok created the post of sixty-four *Phamdous* (nobility). He introduced *Nongdamba Shanglen*, and *Nongdai Shanglen* under the supervision of learned men called *Maichous* (Pathis). Besides the portfolios allocated to *Ningthou Pongba Tara*, (ten noblemen) Khuyoi Tompok also established the post of *Keirungba* (officer-in-charge of State Granary), *Sharungba* (Officer-in-charge of Animal Department), *Ngarungba* (In-charge of Fishery Department), *Shellungba*, (In-charge of Finance Department) *Ningollakpa*, (In-Charge of Woman Affairs) and so on. Ibobi Singh states that it was Meidingu Taothingmang (264-364 CE) who changed the title of king from that of *Piba* to *Ningthou*. Some scholars suggest that during his time, Imphal the capital city was divided into four *Leikais*; each other the charge of *Leikai Lakpa* (in-charge of locality or neighbourhood). Under the control of the *Leikai Lakpa*, there were two officials called *Pakhang Lakpa* (in-charge of bachelors or youth) and the *Ningol Lakpa* (in-charge of a woman)

The next crucial revision in the administrative system took place during the reign of Meidingu Loiyumba (1074-1122 CE), who introduced a system of surname-wise assignment of works to *Sageis* (a group of families of the same lineage). This is known as *Shinyel* (*Shil*=work, *Yel*=distribution). Since this system was introduced by Loiyumba, it came to be known as *Loiyumba Shinyel*. The number of *Panas* were increased from four to six with the addition of *Potsangba* and *Hidakphanba*. Out of the six *Panas*, the last two are regarded as inferior and debarred from *Pana Lamchel* (Division wise race competition). These six *Panas* were clubbed into three groups, namely;(1) *Laipham* and *Khabam* which came to be known as *Khuja*, (2) *Ahallup* and *Naharup* as *Naija*, and (3) *Potsangba* and *Hidakphanba* as *Khumei*. *Laipham*, *Khabam*, *Ahallup* and *Naharup* were to perform military duties and provide the king with certain kinds of vegetables, fruits and trees. They were responsible for providing labour for the

constructing of *Shangs*, such as Kangla Coronation Hall, *Shumsang* (Jail), and *Sinnai Shang* (an institution for learning different trades). On top of other duties, *Hidakphanba* was tasked with the regulation of the use of *Hidak* (Tobacco) and *Hidakphu* (polished *Hookah*) by the king, the nobles and the ordinary people. *Potsangba* had to act as attendant to the king. They were assigned to make for the king *Khudei Phisang* (a type of cloth to be used as a towel), mats, mattress, pillars, *Shelbung* (a kind of gong), etc. Each of these *Panas* worked in two departments called *Shanglen* (Head Office) and *Shangkhuba*. *Shanglen* consisted of *Lakpa*, *Shelungba*, *Hanjaba*, *Pakhanglakpa*, *Nahalakpa*, *Shingshuba Ahal*, *Singshuba Naha*, *Keirungba* etc. The officers of the *Shangkhuba* were *Lairen Lakpa*, *Hanjaba*, *Hidang Pakhang Lakpa*, *Naha lakpa*, *Shinshuba Ahal* and *Shinshuba Naha*.

The core of administration was the administration of justice. *Kuchu* and *Pacha* were courts that existed since the reign of *Pakhangba*. *Kuchu* was the highest court that had comprehensive jurisdiction in both civil and criminal justice. The king was the head of this court, with his nobles assisting him. *Pacha* was a court that heard and decided cases related to women. During the reign of *Pakhangba*, queen *Laisna* was the presiding officer of this court. The wives of *Ningthou Pongba Tara* (ten *Ningthou Pongba*) were the members of this court. The role of *Ningthou Pongba Tara* is almost equivalent to present day senior Cabinet Ministers. The severest form of punishment given by *Pacha* was *Khungoinaba* (ignominy).

II. MANIPUR UNDER BRITISH EMPIRE

After the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891, the British introduced dramatic administrative changes. They installed on the throne the five-year-old boy *Churachand Singh*, on whose behalf British regent Major Maxwell carried out direct rule till 1907. Maxwell was operating both as Superintendent of Manipur and as Political Agent of British Government of India. From 1907 onward, the British pursued the policy of indirect rule. During this period, the

king and his Durbar enjoyed nominal *de-jure* powers whereas the British officers exercised *de-facto* administration.

The administrative system starting from 1919 may be termed *diarchy*. They mechanised a four-tier system of administration in respect to four administrative areas, namely; Hills, Valley, British Reserve and Foreigner's Reserve. First, in the British Reserve, the Political Agent was the executive and judicial head. No Manipuri subject was allowed to have a footing there without permission from the British authorities. It had a separate police force known as Agency Police headed by a Sub-Inspector. Under him, an *Hakim* looked after all minor cases and administrative affairs. The treasury was both an administrative and a bank. *Bengali Babus* employed by the Political Agent sat in this office. In short, the Reserve was a state within a state. Second, specific areas stretching from Kanglatongbi to Kangpokpi (including Kuraopokpi, Koubru laikha, Sapermeina and Keithelmanbi villages) were reserved for foreigners such as Nepalese and British Indian subjects. The Political Agent dealt in all matters relating to the settlement of foreigners. A separate office called Foreigner's Office was established to maintain records and for administration.

1. Administration of Valley:

Regent Major Maxwell was designated a Superintendent, and he took over administrative charge of the valley. He abrogated *Lallup* system on 29th April 1892 and instead imposed a house tax of Rs. 2 on every house occupied by a male adult. Land revenue, assessed on cultivated land, was fixed at Rs.5 per *Pari*, i.e., one hectare of land.¹² A Sub-Deputy Collector (SDC) took charge of revenue collection and related matters. Survey and settlement operations were carried out, for the first time in the modern lines, by SDC Babu Raj Kumar Rai from 2nd August 1897.¹³ The valley was divided into five *Panas* with one *Lakpa* or *Tahshildar*

¹² *Administrative Report of Manipur for the year 1893-94*. p. 4.

¹³ *Administrative Report of Manipur for the year 1897-98*. p. 1.

controlling each circle. The first Cadastral Survey operation was completed in 1899-1900. For every village with one thousand houses, a Circle Panchayat of five members was established. Below it, a Chowkidar was appointed for every one hundred houses, to conduct ordinary trials at the village level.

The judiciary functioned through the following courts, namely; (1) The Court of the Political Agent, (2) The Court of the Assistant Political Agent, (3) The Court of Cheirap, and (4) The Court of Panchayat. The Panchayat Court was further sub-divided into (1) Town Panchayat, (2) Village Panchayat, and (3) Muhamadan Panchayat. Civil and criminal matters relating to British subjects were tried by the two courts of the Political Agent and the Assistant Political Agent. All appeals from the court of Assistant Political Agent and Cheirap Court were placed before the Court of Political Agent. Hence this court may be treated as the highest court in Manipur. Above it was the court of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, which had the powers and functions of a High Court. Cheirap Court comprised five Magistrates and one Honorary Magistrate. All civil and criminal cases involving the subjects of Manipur valley were within the jurisdiction of the Cheirap Court, barring those falling within Town and Village Panchayats. Cheirap Court could try and punish a person with sentences of up to two years' imprisonment and a fine of five hundred rupees.

Revenue farming through a collection of taxes in cash was a peculiar characteristic of British rule. The introduction of *Patta* system, the imposition of various taxes on land, fisheries, hunting, etc. which were meant for collection of revenue in cash were reflective of an oppressive tax regime. When taxation was revised in the 1930s, the imposition of *Jal Sambandhi* became controversial, i.e., prohibition of fishing at the private compound or public water if the water was connected with those presumed to be owned by the State. *Chandan Senkhai* was enforced upon Meitei Hindus for applying *Tilak (Chandan)* on their forehead. *Wakhei Shel*, an exorbitant fee mandatory for the successful party in a court and other examples substantiate subjection under a colonial tax regime.

Colonial rule perpetuated the feudal regime at its extreme form of exploitation. The institutionalisation of the custom of *maangba* and *sengba* (pollution and purity) reached the zenith in the 1920s when officiating purification or elevation of social status carried high monetary value. This custom was instrumentalised by diabolic collusion of the king and his handpicked Brahmin *purohits* to suppress dissents on the one hand and to extract fees of 'purification' on the other hand. The rulers could arbitrarily elevate *en masse* the inhabitants of a village to that of purified Hindu castes, or degrade anyone into a lower caste. Several *Meitei kshetriyas* and *Brahmins* were declassified as *maangba* (polluted) by Brahma Sabha. In 1939, when Brahma Sabha furnished a list of persons who were declassified into *mangba* four were Meitei *Brahmins* (*bamons*) and another Hijam Irabat Singh was a man of high social class and prominence. This institutional custom created fears, rumours and suspicions in the minds of the people.¹⁴

2. Administration of Hills

The British took over direct administration of the hills. People in the hills were subjected under a tax regime. They were forced to pay an annual sum of Rs. 3 per house. Though *lallup* was abolished in the valley, a system of *forced labour* was continued in the hills. People were forced upon to supply labour for road making, transportation, survey, policing and military movements. Tangkhuls were forced to serve in Chin Hills in 1893. Kabuis were forced to pay house tax in 1894. In 1893, hill areas were divided into Mao, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Tengnoupal and Churachandpur divisions. Each division was placed under the charge of a Sardar with seven paid *Lambus* under him. The Assistant Superintendent dealt with civil and criminal matters relating to the hills. In 1906, a hill office was established under the supervision of the Political Agent. In 1907 when *Manipur Administration Rules 1907* was introduced, hill administration was

¹⁴Letter from McDonald, ICS, to the members of Manipur State Durbar, dated 3rd March 1938.

entrusted to the Vice-President (British officer) of Manipur State Durbar. The powers and functions of the Vice-President were clearly stipulated by Rule I of the *Existing Rules for the Administration of the Hill Tribes*.¹⁵

On the eve of the First World War, the condition of the hill people was quite deplorable. On top of taxes and obligatory contribution of labour, they were forced to fight in the war. Kukis revolted against it from 1917 to 1919. However, the 22nd Labour Corps consisting of two thousand hill men through forced conscription was sent to France against their will in May 1917. According to Lal Dena, they were treated not as human beings but as human machines for digging trenches, carrying loads and building base camps. The Kuki revolt (1917-1919) prompted yet another reformation in the administration of hill areas. Under the new scheme, the hill areas were to be administered in the name of the Maharaja by the President (British official) of the Manipur State Durbar. Three new sub-divisions were formed for the hills, each under the charge of one Sub-Divisional Officer. Mr B.C. Gasper became in-charge of South-West Sub-Division with headquarter at Churachandpur. North-West Sub-Division was placed under the charge of Mr W. Shaw with headquarter at Tamenglong. Mr L.D. Peter became in-charge of North-East Sub-Division with headquarter at Ukhrul. A large portion of the northern hills (including Mao and Maram areas), south-east (including Mombi area) and a number of hill villages bordering the valley, were to be administered directly by the President of the Durbar from Imphal. The number of Sub-Division at that time was four, including Sadar Sub-Division with its headquarter at Imphal, which was also directly administered by a British official. Hill administration system was altered again in January 1930. The Sub-Divisional Offices established in 1919 were abolished, and the whole area was placed under the control of the President (British) of the Manipur State Durbar. Two Sub-Divisional

¹⁵ Assam Secretariat Proceedings (ASP), Political Department. Political-A. Nos.1-19. December, 1919.

Officers, one in charge of the north and the other in charge of the south, were appointed to assist him.

III. CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

Manipur went through a qualitative political transformation towards the later part of the 1940s. The prospect of 'transfer of power' has generated an unprecedented level of political hopes and aspirations. Educated middle class [*elite*] across communities began to play active roles in spreading an unprecedented level of political consciousness motivating people to raise community demands and civil and political rights. The old regimes of colonialism and monarchy were coming to a closing chapter and a new system had to emerge that would make governance more representative and inclusive. The elite across communities had to take the opportunity of the changing constitutional environment, to organise themselves into mass organisations and political parties, to create personal space and to assert ideology and political agenda they respectively represented. Three powerful political currents enjoyed the backing of respective constituencies and had to finally reconcile with a collective political future, namely; royalists, democrats and communists. The Democrats were composed of various sections including community leaders representing hill communities and minorities. They finally reconciled with a *constitutional monarchy*, i.e., a representative democratic government to be constituted by elected leaders under the nominal head of the king. The first and foremost, step to convert their agenda into practice was to adopt a democratic Constitution that had to become binding to the entire people of Manipur.

Chronologically; in 1946, the Maharaja constituted a Constitution-Making Committee consisting of five non-official representatives elected by an Electoral College, six representatives from the hills, four officials nominated by Durbar, and one chosen by the Maharaja.¹⁶ The members from the hills were nominated by the President of the Durbar Mr F.F. Pearson (a British officer), who was

¹⁶ Palace order No.30P, 1946.

also the Chairman of the Constitution Making Committee. The First sitting of the Committee was held on 24th March 1947. On its fourth sitting on 29th March, two sub-committees were formed, namely; Constitution Drafting Sub-Committee,¹⁷ and Hill Regulation Drafting Sub-Committee.¹⁸ In a full sitting of the Drafting Committee, two drafts were passed and placed before the Maharaja for approval. The Maharaja approved the *Manipur Hill People's (Administration) Regulation 1947* and implemented it in early August 1947. He initially reserved the *Manipur State Constitution Act* for some months and approved it in early 1948. A constitutional monarchy was established.

Some of the significant features of the Constitution were: (1) Abolition of absolute monarchism and replacement in its place by Constitutional Monarchy; (2) Enforcement of parliamentary democracy, thereby, permitting civil and political rights, including the rights to adult franchise to elect representative; (3) Equality before law irrespective of caste, religion, community, and regional distinction; (4) A federal structure of governance that provides certain privilege to minorities and hill communities— *Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation 1947* sanctioned certain level of 'internal autonomy' of hill communities within the broader common political framework. In short, everyone was expected to enjoy a certain level of political gain from the new system and structure of governance. For minute detail of the federal structure, one may study; (1) *Manipur Constitution Act, 1947*, (2) *Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation 1947*, (3) the procedure of Manipur Election, 1948, and (3) Community composition of MLAs and the Cabinets and their

¹⁷The composition of the Constitution Drafting Sub-Committee was: L.M. Ibungohal Singh, Chairman; A. Ibotombi Singh (alias Minaketan), Member; H. Dwijamani Dev Sharma, Member; S. Krishnamohon Singh, Member, and A. Daiho, Member.

¹⁸The composition of the Sub-Committee for drafting of the Hill Regulation was: F. F. Pearson, Chairman; A. Ibotombi Singh, Member; A. Daiho, Member; Suisa, Member; T.C. Tianskham, Member; Teba Kilong, Member, and; Dr. Leiren Singh, Member.

portfolios. What became glaringly evident for Manipur was the culmination of the communities into a voluntarily constituted political community formed on the basis of common political agenda and common constitution. The communists claimed that their agenda had not been entirely fulfilled, but they contested in the election and Hjam Irabot secured a seat from Utlu constituency. No communities were singled out and left out; Kuki, Meitei, Naga, and Pangal exercised political rights and were seated in the newly constituted Government.

The proud moment for the people of Manipur was the inauguration of the first Manipur State Assembly on October 18, 1948. The Maharaja who had willingly subscribed to the new era, in his new capacity as the Head of State, asserted that the future of Manipur lies in the unity of communities. He recollected;

“All these times when Manipur was in the height of her power, Hill and Valley were one; and this oneness defended Manipur against all invasions and thus, she could maintain her independence up to 1891 when the rest of India had already conquered by the British. The British conquest of this land resulted from the slackened unity between the Valley and Hills. Now, since the withdrawal of British paramount of 56 years, we have reinforced the union of Hill and Valley; and best opportunities have reached us in order to work hand-in-hand towards achieving the common object of progress and national prosperity. The relation has become one of complete understanding and active sympathy; and it must be so, for Manipur is one, and the hopes and aspirations of Hill and Valley are identical.”

Unfortunately, the life of independent Manipur was cut short before it could fully experience self-rule. Manipur was controversially merged with Indian Union, and Manipur Government was dissolved on 15th October 1949.

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Shared Belief and Socio-Cultural Relationship

The people of Manipur have been living together with shared beliefs for a long time. Communities trace the abode of their ancestors in familiar hills and mountain. Many of them visit sacred places and offer devotion at sacrosanct *surungs* (caves), *leikhuns* (holes inside the earth) and *leikut-leirai* (gorges). For instance, Angom Salai (Meitei) considered *Khangkhui Surung* (Khangkhui cave) in Ukhrul as the abode of their ancestors. Many irrespective of community affiliation considered Thangjing, Nongmaiching and Koubru hills as the place of their origin. Many amongst valley dwellers believe that Koubru peak, the highest peak to the north of the village, and its surrounding high lands and hills were the points of dispersal towards different directions. This belief has reverberated over the years through folk song that tells;

<i>Manipuri</i>	<i>English translation</i>
<i>Awang Koubru Ashuppa</i>	<i>Koubru peak to the north is the highest place</i>
<i>Laiyam Khunda Ahanba</i>	<i>where Gods made their foremost habitation</i>
<i>Sanalik Mapal Thadringei</i>	<i>and created different orders of living beings</i>
<i>Sanalik Mapal Thariba</i>	<i>Gods are the roots</i>
<i>Nongthrei Mawoo Lingdringe</i>	<i>from which living beings</i>
<i>Nongthrei Mawoo Lingliba</i>	<i>bloom like flowers¹</i>

According to Kangjia, there were more than fifty sacred places in Koubru hills where people had settled before their separation, such as *Sangai Yumpham Achouba*, *Sangai Yumpham Macha*, *Amam Leisalok*, *Saroithel*, *Nung-Yangkok*, *Nung-Sumbal*, *Nung-*

¹ Singh., L. Bheigyachandra. (1987). *The Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis Before the Advent of Vaisnavism in Manipur*. Imphal: L. Momon Devi. p. 28.

suk, *Santhong Ikon*, *Pokpi Leisanu*, *Meeren Pontinpham*, and *Pakhangba Laikom*. The first *Lai-Haraoba* of the ancestors of communities is believed to have taken place at *Kouba Haraothel* at Koubru hills. During the course of separation many migrated to nearby low-lying hills, such as Thangjing Ching, Laimaton Nungthabi Ching, Marjing Ching, Chingkhei Ching, Wangbren Ching, Kounu Ching, Loyalakpa Ching, Langol Ching, Phunal Ching, Noibi Ching, Mahou Ching, Chothe Nungsuk Ching, Nungei Ching, Kongba Maru Ching, Thongam Mondum Ching, Phojing, Waroiching, Langmangdong Ching, Maibam lokpa Ching, Nongpok Sekmaiching Khoriphabaching, and Chingphuching, etc.

There was a further separation between those who remained in the hills and those who opted to move to a new home in the plain areas. The migrants did build *pungs* (mounds) wherever they settled, suggesting that they were yet to acclimatise to the swampy conditions of the valley fully and could not entirely shake off the habit of dwelling in highlands. Chongthamcha Nganba refers to about fifty-seven *pungs* (mounds) that were erected before the Christian era along with the names of those who occupied them. In many ancient texts, Imphal Kangla is described as *Kangla Pungmayol* (Kangla, the centre of all mounds).

The methodical process of migration from the higher altitude to lower levels, and finally to the mounds in the plain regions, clearly maps out the movement of select groups of people and their separation from their ancestral homes in the hills. Understandably, the mountains and highlands of Manipur are thought of as the place of origin of ancestors, though many of it could be places of dispersal or sojourn.

I. MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF COMMON ORIGIN

Before the advent of written records, history was encapsulated in legends, folklore, mythologies, stories and oral traditions. For Manipur, too, the legends of its peoples were the vital source of its history, and many of them point to a common origin. Given below are examples that attest to this claim.

1. Mao-Maram Legend

Mao legend says that in the beginning there was a woman called Dziili Mosiirro at Makhel, a place situated in Mao area. One day, while she was sitting at the foot of a banyan tree, the spirit of *Oramei* (god) appeared before her in the form of a cloud from the east and overshadowed her. As a result, she conceived and gave birth to *Ora* (god), *Okhe* (tiger), and *Omei* (man). These three brothers lived for a long time at Makhel, and their offspring multiplied abundantly. In due course of time, Mosiirro died, and two brothers of *Omei* and *Okhe* migrated to different places. *Omei* was the father of Choutou, Alapha and Khephio. Choutou, in turn, was the father of *Mikriime* (Meiteis), Alapha the father of *Kolamei* also known as *Mayang* (Cachari/Tripuri) in Manipuri language, and Khephio, the father of Nagas. After roaming around many places, the descendants of Choutou finally settled at Chingmeirong (approximately two kilometres north of Kangla).

Another version of the story is that once there was a man called *Aleo* (the first man). He had three sons, namely, (1) Alapha—considered to be *Mayang*, who were originally identified with Dimasa, Kachari, and Tripuri, (2) *Tutuwo*—considered to be first of the present Meiteis, and, (3) *Khephio*—considered to be first of the present Nagas. At the time of their departure from the land of their father, they hosted a grand party and erected a stone depicting their life at Makhel. It is the belief of the people that *one day the brothers shall come back and live under one family*. Marams also believe that men first settled at Makhel and those who migrated to the east became Tangkhul, and two brothers Tingphi Maraba and Makikhangba migrated towards the south and settled together for some time at *Nagengkuid*. Youngest brother Makikhangba went to the valley and became Meitei.

2. Tangkhul Legend

Tangkhuls have more than one legend that describes their origin. According to one, there were two brave brothers who formed two groups and launched an expedition in search of a more suitable

place of habitation. The group led by Naokhoba, the elder brother whose name means “very brave child,” went and settled at a place located between the current day Mao and Angami areas. The younger brother’s group meanwhile chose a fertile valley, and they eventually became Meiteis.

A second legend talks of three brothers who had lived at Makhel. The eldest stayed back, while the other two left and passed through the villages of Khongtai, Kachai, and Phungthan; they finally arrived at Hundung and settled there. The second brother stayed back at Hundung. However, the youngest proceeded further and followed a pregnant pig to a place adjacent to Yaingangpokpi or Oknaopokpi, where it gave birth to offspring. According to Hundung legend, the descendants of the younger brother who followed the pig got mixed up with other settlers and cultivated new habits. He settled there and became Meitei.

There is also a legend of a *mystic python* from Hundung village. The daughter of a chief was bathing when a butterfly hovered up to her and rested upon her. This union led to the conception, and she subsequently gave birth to three healthy sons. Once they had grown old enough, the three boys began to ask her about the identity of their father. She called on him to appear and spread out a mat to receive him. The sons were instructed to see their father one by one. When the two elder sons went to see their father, they were instead greeted by a huge serpent coiled upon the mat. Though they were terrified by the sight of their father’s incarnated form, the youngest son approached the serpent and embraced it. Thus, he became dearest to his parents. This same legend further says that Thangal, Tangkhul, and Meitei were the descendants of the three sons of the *mystic python*. Roland Shimmi asserts that Tangkhuls continued to believe that a lucky person was the child of or was favoured by the *mystic python*.

3. Kabui Legend

Kabuis believe that once there were seven brothers who migrated to different places. The eldest son Thangraba and his wife Makengnu went to the north and settled at Makeng Thangal Khul.

The second son Chakraba and his wife Chakribi went towards the northeast and after crossing Siroy Hills found their home at *Khamgoi Men Surung* and became the first Tangkhul. The third son Kabuiru Sallamba and with his wife Lagangnu went towards the north-west and settled at *Kurum-sanaching Laikham-Chingand* became the first Kabui. It is said that the name of Koubru-ching is derived from the name Kabuiru. The fourth son Taraoba and his wife Taringbi went to Langol and became the progenitor of Langol Maring. The fifth son Kharamba took to the south and settled at Kharamching and became the progenitor of Kharam. The sixth son Thebchan migrated towards the southwest and became the ancestor of Chothe. The youngest son Poireiton chose the valley and was the forebearer of Meiteis.²

Another Kabui legend shares the Tangkhul legend about the youngest brother who went in search of a pig. A big python devoured the piglets of the pig. In Kabui version, the youngest brother was after that instructed by his mother to throw pieces of ginger around the pig shelter to keep the python away. The Tangkhul legend mentions the use of turmeric instead. As turmeric is called *yaingang* in Manipuri, the place where the youngest brother settled came to be known as Yaingangpokpi.³ As per this legend, he was the first Meitei.

4. Thadou-Kuki legend

In Thadou-Kuki legend, two brothers—one of whom would become the founder of Khongjai and the other of Meiteis—quarrelled a piece of cloth given to them by their mother. In her distribution, the mother had the given bigger share of the cloth to the younger brother. The brothers parted ways following the argument, each marking their way by cutting two different kinds of trees. The trees marked by the elder brother quickly turned

²Sairem Nilbir. (2001). Paper presented at the seminar on the theme *Chingmi-Tammi-gi Yelhoungeidagi Leinarakpa Naknaba Mari*, organized by Manipur State Archives. Imphal. p. 1.

³Y.L Roland Shimmi. (1988). *Comparative History of the Nagas. From Ancient Period till 1826*. New Delhi: Inter-India Publications. p. 83.

black; fewer people chose his path, thinking that he must have passed long time back because of the discoloured marks. The trees marked by the younger brother remained white for a long time. Therefore, a more significant number of people followed him, and they eventually became Meiteis. It was because of this that Meiteis have a larger population compared to Khongjais.

Yet another account tells us of a jumping contest among the three sons of a common ancestor. The brother who would be the ancestor of Kuki leapt from the top of a range of hills to the crest of the next. The brother who would be the ancestor of Nagas cleared an intervening valley to foothill while attempting to reach the top but his foot slipped and fell into the river. The brother who would be Meiteis tumbled headlong into the river while attempting to jump over the valley. As per the legend, this incident explains the brothers' fondness of bathing at different levels and ropes the speculation of a common ancestor.

The examples cited above are just a few of the numerous legends that narrate the common origin of the people of Manipur.

II. CONJUGAL RELATIONSHIP

The documented history of intermarriage across communities is a significant illustration of their closeness. The love story of Wangam (Ningthouja) maiden Panthoibi and a Wung (Tangkul) bachelor Kainou Chingsomba, dating back to the time before the establishment of Ningthouja kingdom in 33 CE in the valley is a shining example. Though there are much evidence of the marriage and love stories of many maidens from hills communities with kings, nobles and princes of the valley, a reverse, *i.e.*, marriage of Meitei women with men from hills, has little to no record at all. Information pertaining to the matter can be obtained from the sources of hill people for which serious academic research into the subject is required.

Some instances of intermarriage across communities in hills and valley in the ancient historical period are given below.

1. Moyon

In the archaic text *Poireiton Khunthokpa* (Migration of Poireiton) there is a reference to Moyon as early as the 1st century CE. Moyons had a long-established relationship with the kings of Moirang and Meitei. Moyon folk songs mention one Tonu, a Moyon girl, marrying a man from the valley.

2. Haoku

Khongjomnubi Nongarol is an important ancient literary text dealing with the romantic affairs of six beautiful Luwang maidens and six Haoku *pakhangs* (bachelors). The six Luwang maidens came to the fishing weir of the Haoku *pakhangs* to buy fish and became acquainted with the six men in their first meeting. The latter insisted the maidens stay the night with them at the fishing barrier so that they might return home with plenty of fish the next morning. When the maidens finally reached home, they were severely ill-treated by their mothers and relatives for spending a night with men. They left in despair for the kingdom of Sorarel (Meitei sky god), where they were reunited with their lovers.

3. Maram

The love story of Meidingu Charairongba (1697-1709 CE) and Maram maiden Makinei as recounted by Th. Thumbu Maram is almost parallel to the love story of Maram Chanu Ingallei and Meidingu Paikhomba (1666-1697).⁴ It may be summarised as follows:

Makinei was the daughter of Rowkaang, the chief of Maram Khullen. Charairongba was brought up in this village and was known by the name Rangba. Rangba and Makinei fell in love. When they were old enough to marry, he asked her to elope with

⁴Thumbu Maram confused Charairongba for Paikhomba; however, his narrative about intercommunal conjugal relationship is significant.

him, promising in the name of the sun, moon, and heaven, that she would be made the queen of Kanglei, the Manipuri kingdom. He failed to keep his word but constructed a house (*Nonglen Shang*) especially for her outside the palace. Makinei became pregnant and gave birth to a boy, who would eventually become Garibniwaz. Charairongba put Makinei under the care of Thangal Sagong (chief of Thangal Surung) and sent food and clothing for her beloved wife and son. Marams believe that it was Charairongba's inability to honour the oath he had taken in the name of the celestial bodies and heaven that caused him to be struck by lightning.⁵

4. Selloi Langmai

Meidingu Naothingkhong (663-763 CE), also known as Hongnemyoi Khunjao, wedded Selloi Langmai *ningol* (kinswoman) Petanga Liklu Louthibi. She was the daughter of Wamei Lanthaba, a member of the Achong Yumlemba family of Nongmaiching. The couple enjoyed a year of youthful happiness and love at Langmai hills, but their conjugal bliss did not last long. It was Petanga who saved the life of Naothingkhong from the hands of Selloi Langmai hill men when hostilities broke out between Langmais and Ningthoujas, the clansmen of her husband. Though the story ended with tragedy, it illustrates the immortal love story of a hill woman and a valley prince.

5. Kabui

According to Paojairung Thaimai, Maharaj Bhaigyachandra (1763-1798 CE) married Lujenglei (Lujengliu) of Laphok

⁵Th. Thumbu Maram. (2002). *The Marams. A Short History of the Indigenous Communities of Kangleipak*. Vol. II. Imphal: The League of Fourth World People, Kangleipak. p. 85.

(Biteng) village, who subsequently assumed the title of *Rajeswori*.⁶

There are other examples of marital alliances across communities. Konsouren, the great-grandfather of Meidingu Pakhangba, married a maiden of Laiyek/Laikhot/Laikot belonging to Kom. Meitei deity *Koubru Sararel* married Korouleima Naihunu, a *ningol* of Haorok-Konthou, who later came to be known as Meitei deity *Konthoujam Lairembi*. It is also said that when Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was a fugitive at Moirang, he had a clandestine relationship with a hill woman Yunam, the wife of Mungyangchao. They had two sons, Mungyangchaoba and Tanggru Lumyiba.

III. COMMON DEITIES

Common cultural thread shared by the people of Manipur is proven by commonality in the worship of certain divinities, such as *Lainingthou Sanamahi*, the household deity, though the name attributed to the deity and the nature of worship are different from one community to another. Kabuis cosmology attributes to their deity the name *Dampaipu*. He is the eldest son of Haipou Ragwang Theimakpula, who is *Lainingthou Sidaba Lai* for Meiteis. His younger brother *Apou* is identified with *Pakhangba*. Worship of *Sanamahi* or similar deity is also said to be a part of the *Luir* (seed sowing) festival of Tangkhuls. Koms, Chothes, Purums, and Marings are a few others who worshipped a deity identical to *Lainingthou Sanamahi*.

1. Konthoujam Lairembi

The story of Huimu Leima Nahuinu (Konthoujam Lairembi), later known as Nongleima, the wife of Koubru Sararel (Sorarel), is similar to that of Haigonhang Chanu Dilenglu of Kabuis, who

⁶Thaimaei Paujairung. (2000). Meehourolgi Wari Hanna Ningshingba. *A Short History of Indigenous Communities of Kangleipak*. Vol. I. Imphal: League of Fourth World People, Kangleipak. p. T-9.

married Ragwang (Sararel). Nahuinu was the daughter of Santhong Huimu Leima Nungchengyamba of Haorok Konthou lineage. In both, the stories the woman goes to her parental home where she eats forbidden food and consequently separates from Sararel. In Kabui myth, her lineage becomes Gonthang, while in Meitei version, it is Konthoujam.⁷ Huimu Leima's first son was the progenitor of Leisangthem *salai*; the second son Lamlekshang (Lampokshang) of Kabuis; and the third son Theng-koiba of Haorok Konthou. Till recently, no *Lai-Haraoba* of Konthoujam Lairembi could be performed until the Kabuis of Konthoujam village had felicitated some presentations to the deities.

2. Laiyingthou (Lainingthou) Nongsaba

Laiyingthou Nongsabais believed to be an incarnation of Chingu Khoiyum Atiya Sidaba. The deity is a common deity of both *chingmi* (hill inhabitants) and *tammi* (valley inhabitants). It is said that the image of the deity of *Lainingthou Nongsaba* was secretly lifted from the place of Thayaipok Khamba of Mantak village and taken to Moirang. From Moirang it was then transported to Wangu and Chothe Khul, before being rerouted to Moirang and eventually to the royal palace during the reign of Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652). The Kom of Mantak village still worships the deity at its original place.

3. Haoreima Sambubi

The deity is known by various names, such as Haoma Liklang Saphabi, and Haorang Leisang Saphabi, Lara Lasangnu, and Luirala. She was the daughter of Khelemba, the chief of Tangkhul Chingdai village, and the spouse of Khamlangba, the chief of Tangkhul Chingshong village. It is said that she had a secret affair with Meidingu Tabungba (1359-1394 CE) who was also known as Tabung Saphaba. This angered Khamlangba, and he beheaded Tabung Saphaba. The aggrieved Haoreima Sambubi took the head

⁷The name Konthoujam could be a corruption of Gonthang, or vice versa.

of her beloved lover to Kanglei Pungmayol. Some scholars suggest that the relationship cost the lovers their lives and Haoreima Sambubi turned into the Meitei goddess of tragic love and separation. She is also worshipped as Lairembi Ireima, an incarnation of Panthoibi, and though her origin is Tangkhul, she is held by Meiteis as one of their primary deities.

4. Laiyingthou (Lainingthou) Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba

Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba, later the king of Moirang, married Khamlangtaobi, the daughter of the chief of Chothe Tamang Khul. He was also known as Puriklai Thingri Nachouba. When we talk about Puriklai Thingri Nachouba he is being personified as a king of Moirang; his evolution into Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba lends mystery to his character, and he assumes the form of a mythological figure. He is believed to be an incarnation of Tubi Lairen Taoroinai. Since Chothes believe that Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba was of Chothe origin, they worship him at Chothe Nungsukching. He is, therefore, a common deity of both Meiteis and Chothes.

5. Ibudhou Thangjing Koirel Lai

Both Meiteis and Koirengs worship Ibudhou Thangjing. The deity is believed to be an incarnation of Chingu Khoiyum Konjin Tingthokpa, a great god of Meiteis. The Koirengs of Thangjing hills believes that the idol of *Ibudhou Thangjing* was taken by the Moirangs who defeated them in war. Sairem Nilbir states that the name of the deity was changed to Thangjing Koirel (a corrupt word of Koireng) Lai because of its attachment to Koireng.

6. Langol Tarung Lairemma (Lairembi)

During the reign of Meidingu Khunjaoba (1652-1666), Marams beheaded his brother and son to avenge the death of Maram chief Charai Kapong and took with them the heads of the two men. The next king Meidingu Paikhomba (1666-1697), son of Khunjaoba,

disguised himself as an ordinary man and sneaked into Maram village to steal the heads back. He succeeded with the help of Ingallei, the daughter of Maram chief. Ingallei and Paikhomba fell in love, and he intended to make her Leimaren (chief queen). His plan was, however, stymied by palace intrigue. When Meidingu Paikhomba was away from the capital to subdue a revolt of Makeng Thangal, some nobles conspired and burnt down the Nonglen Shang where Ingallei lived. Ingallei fled from the scene and went to 'Ngangcheng Punshi Lok,' a place in Langol hills, and there she died in grief and agony. It is believed that after her death, Ingallei became Langol Tarung Lairemma, an important deity of Meiteis. As stated above the same story is being told by Thumbu Maram in which Paikhomba is mistaken for Charairongba. It follows naturally that Ingallei is known as Makinei in Maram.

7. Laiyingthou Wangbren

Laiyingthou Wangbren, the ruling Meitei deity of the south, is respected and revered by both Anals and Meiteis. He also goes by the name of Khoibu Naha Pakhangba and is Meitei god of water and rain. According to a living legend, Wangbren married Shangkhurembi (or Shangnu/Shangno), daughter of Anal chief Mongyam Ngamba.⁸ He won the hand of Shangno⁹ by defeating Anal youths, including his main competitor Thuwmkhel, in various competitions such as wrestling and stone throwing. Relics believed to be connected with the legend are still seen at a place known as *Hlungke-pa* in Anal Khullen (Limkhu), located

⁸Anal Khullen people believe that Shagno was the daughter of a widow, not that of a Khullakpa or chief.

⁹Anals traditionally add either prefix or suffix to female child (children), e.g., Khikhi for the 1st daughter, Toto for the 2nd, Shangshang for the 3rd, Pepe for the 4th, and Thumthum for the 5th. For the names after the 5th, there is repetition of the prefix or suffix in the same order, but with little change of the ending syllable of the last word by putting no, e.g., Khino for the 6th daughter, Tono for the 7th, Shangno for the 8th, Peno for the 9th, and so on. Anal Chanu Shangno must be the eight daughters.

approximately twenty-five kilometres south-west of Chandel District headquarters. *Laiyingthou Khana Chaoba*, a revered deity of Meiteis, is the son of *Laiyingthou Wangbren* and *Shangkhurembi*.

8. Nongpok Ningthou- Panthoibi

Kainou Chingsomba, alias Nongpok Ningthou, was a Tangkhul young man who wed Apanbee, alias Panthoibi a lady belonging to Poirei or Wangam-Ningthouja clan. In Manipur, some innumerable gods and goddesses are believed to be incarnations of *Nongpok Ningthou* and *Panthoibi*.

Mention may also be made of *Laiyingthou Phunal Ningthou* (worshipped by both Meiteis and Funan Marings), and *Kondong Lairembi* in whose honour a temple was constructed at Kondong village, some four kilometres from the border town of Moreh on National Highway-39. The name of Anal Chanu and Chothe Chanu *Imoinu Chahongbi* are included amongst the names of nine Laibendhou (female deities) whose seats are being kept reserved during the occasion of *Ibudhou Thangjing Haraoba* at Moirang. The *Men Surung* of *Ibudhou Pakhangba*, situated at Makeng Thangal and Mapao Thangal, is venerated and adored by Thangals. *Lainingthou Koubru* is another important deity revered and adulated by Meiteis, Kabuis and Koirengs.

Names of the tutelary deities with their associate communities who are worshipped both by the hill and valley people are as follows:

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Tutelary Deities</u>	<u>Their Associates</u>
North	Marching	Mao and Maram
North-east	Chingkhei Ningthou	Tangkhuls
East	Nongpok Ningthou	Tangkhul and Murrings
South-east	Irum Ningthou	Tangkhul and Murrings
South	Wangbren	Anals, Nanfous, Moyon, and Monsangs

South-west	Thangjing	Koirengs
West	Loiyarakpa	Cheroos
North-west	Koubru	Kabuis ¹⁰

When Nongda Lairen Pakhangba became king, he asked the descendants of the great ancestors who went with their tutelary duties to come down and settle in the valley like their other brothers. However, it is told that they expressed their happiness to be in hills for tutelary duties.

IV. ABSORPTION/ASSIMILATION

Although the pattern of emigration was from hills to plain regions at first, a section of the population that had settled in valley returned to hills—a phenomenon that is still observable today. A few instances found in recorded history are provided below:

1. *Poireiton Khunthokpa*, a great migration story of Meiteis, recorded that many in Poireiton’s group became Tangkhul, Tarao, Maring, Khoibu, Kabui and other communities.

2. In the first century CE, some Khabas after being defeated at the hands of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba were absorbed into Tangkhul, Kabui and Mahou (a sub-clan of Kom) communities.

3. Lamlekshang, the elder brother of Nungngou Yumthangba, the ancestor of Chenglei or Thangyi or SarangLeisangthem, went to the hills and settled there.¹¹ His descendants became Songbu Kabui that now reside in the southwestern hills of Manipur.

4. Kouba Anganga, who became Moirang and some ancestors of Lokha-Haokha, Chakpa, and Tangkhul are said to be sons of Ningthou Kaksu Tonkonba and Urum Khoujonbi.

¹⁰ Bheigyachandra. *The Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis...*p. 20.

¹¹ Padmashree Khelchandra refers to ancient texts *Leithak Leikharol, Pudin* and *Leishangthemlon*.

5. Laipha, the youngest son of Khuman Semba Mimaba¹² and Khayoiron Nganuthumbi became Maring.¹³

6. During the reign of Meidingu Naokhamba, many kin of Khaba migrated towards the east beyond Nongmajing hills and became Tangkhul Machiba.

7. Lokhan, the son of Luwang Ningthou Punsiba and Chingnung Haoba Chanu, became Thangal Makhan.

8. The youngest brother of Sanahougba, the king of Moirang, and his followers became Akam Hao.

9. Poirei Ningthou Hanba Nganba Khaifaba Thonga Themfaba (the first chief of Nganbas) had by his wife Khamen Lokpam Chanu two sons, Tangkhul and Khaba.¹⁴

10. Parallel to these Meitei's assimilation into hill communities, the reverse also happened. According to Roland Shimmi, Khaba-Nganba, one of the important Meitei clans, is believed to be closely related to Khapainao and Kapinao of the Tangkhul. There are Meitei clans who have families whose origins are traced in other communities. Examples include:

¹²Senba Mimaba was the son of Luwang Ningthou Punshiba and Khayoiron Nhanuthumbi, daughter of Khuman Ningthou and Punshi Yumoiba. After Nganuthumbi separated from Punshiba, both mother and son lived at Khuman. Senba Mimaba Khuman king after the death of his maternal grandfather. Following his death Yoithoingai, son of Khuman Ningthou Yumoiba rebelled and became Khuman king. Three sons of Senba Mimaba fled Khuman. The eldest Laiku went to Leitang, the second Laikha went to Uchiwa, and the youngest Laipha went to Maring region and became a Maring.

¹³As recorded in Khumanlon

¹⁴Narendra Singh refers to ancient texts *Lai Khunda* and *Meihourol Yumbi* Puyas.

<i>Host Meitei Clan/ Surname</i>	<i>Related community</i>
Asem and Nongtholbam	Anal
Sanasam and Nongtholbam	Tangkhum
Soibam, Akoijam, Puyam, Nongtholbam, Ningthoujam and Wahengbam	Maring
Moirangthem and Haobam	Kabui
Meinam, Maimom, Thongram, Chanambam and Khumujam	Chingshang/Chingshong Hao
Chakpram and Kolom	Achep Hao
Waribam, Yumkhaibam and Soibam	Haochong, Nongchup and Nungkot respectively
Nongtholbam	Purum

It is also stated that when Pamheiba (1709-1748) was taken away from Thangal Surung to Kangla palace with two other companions; they were being kept at *Hao (Haomacha) Loishang*, which had been re-organised or re-established. Their descendants were assumed to have absorbed in Haobam and Ngangbam families respectively.

V. CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP

It is generally accepted that pre-Christian society of the hill communities and pre-Hindu Meitei society were almost identical. This is supported by the evidence cited below:

1. *Leiroom*, a native blanket, is a customary presentation by the bride's parents in every Meitei marriage. *Leiroom* has a Tangkhul cloth weaving pattern. The presentation of *Leiroom* was introduced by Angom Ningthou Pureiromba, the younger brother of Kainou Chingsomba and a senior contemporary of Nongda lairen Pakhangba. He gifted the ceremonial blankets to the two persons who came to seek the hand of his daughter Nongmoinu Ahongbi (Thoinu Ahongbi) for Khuiyoi Tompok (154-264 CE). Kainou Chingsomba is said to have belonged to Wung (Tangkhum) community; thus, the style of weaving and fabric used are almost the same as traditional Tangkhul cloth.

Another cloth of Meiteis, *Karao phi*, is the *Changkhom* of Tangkhuls. In this regard, Hundung tradition points out that

people of two Tangkhul villages of Karao and Hungshung which are known to the Meiteis as Mahadev and Hungshung Kay had descended in the valley and merged with Meiteis. Tangkhul cloth pattern known as *Changkhom* is being named *Karao Phi* by Meiteis from the name of the village that merged with Meiteis.

2. While performing certain rituals and cultural activities the people of Manipur wear their respective traditional costumes (dress). It also became a customary practice to wear the robes of hill communities at the time of the coronation of the King of Manipur. Here we may refer to Sir James Johnston who claimed that at some point in history, the Nagas to the north made one of their chiefs the king of Manipur. Like the Manchus in China and other conquerors, adopting the culture of the place from where they were originated, Manipur kings too, retained some of their old customs. This was shown in the curious practice at the installation of a king when he had the queen appear in Naga costume; also, that he always had in his palace a house built like a Naga's, and wherever he went he was attended by two or three guards with Naga arms and accoutrements.

3. *Lai Haraoba* (Kanglei) is another glaring instance of the close relationship between the hill and valley communities. On the last day of this festival, a ritual known as *Tangkhul Thokpa* (appearance of Tangkhul) is to be performed and mandatory. A ritual had to be initiated by a pair of male and female protagonists wearing Tangkhul traditional attire correspondingly representing Nongpok Ningthou and Panthoibi, the divine (mystic) couple, without which *Kanglei Haraoba* could not be completed. In the *Lai Haraoba* of certain sylvan deities of the east, invitation of people from Tangkhul villages is a norm.

4. It was also a customary practice of the kings of Manipur that before laying the foundation stone of the king's palace or *Sangairen*, prayers and rituals should first be performed by Kabuis. Only then could the construction work be taken up.

Mention may be made of Langmangdong palace, Langthabal palace (1709), and temporary palace at Sangaiprou.

5. Meiteis have as many as one hundred and eight names for pillars and supports like *Yumbi*, *Humdang*, and so on for their houses. Though the hill communities do not use these names, there are similarities in the construction plan of the houses. To cite an example, the people of Kasom Khullen (in Kamjong District) believe that pillars and supports should have as many as forty names. Like Meiteis erecting the first central pillar (*urep, iham*) before others, the hill communities also practice the same method. For Tangkhuls the front carved pillar is regarded as the central pillar. For Kabuis, the central pillar is the one next to the main front door.

6. The houses of hill and valley communities generally face east and have *Kai* (a type of wooden cross) on top of the house. Traditional architectural styles are also similar. Meiteis use *Chirong* or *kai* at the temples of sylvan deities [*similar to*] *Keirel Keijao* that are found in the houses of Chakpa villages. *Chirong* is known as *Ki kai* in Mao, *Ki Chai* in northern Mao, *Lengcheng* and *Phen* in Tangkhul, *Kai chai* in Kabui, *Indrika* in Maring, *Laichi* in Andro, *Chirong* or *Kai* in Meitei, *Koungnap riki* in Chiru, and *Chiki* in Purul. Meiteis also decorate their traditional houses with varieties of carved birds as seen in the *Ahong Yum (Tarang Kai)* of Kabuis. Like Kabuis and some other communities, occasionally, Meiteis also draw *Panlandabi* in their house. *Panlandabi* is some geometrical drawings which have some similarities with those of Indonesia, Malasia and Thailand.

7. Dormitory system is found both in the hill and the valley; in the form of *Leisa-phal* and *Pakhang-phal* for Meiteis, *Khangchong* or *Khangchu* for Kabuis, *Yelong* or *Yanlong* for Tangkhuls, *Rangki* for Marams, *Khrechireku* or *Ekhrochi*, *Elochi* for Maos, *Alal-Ungna* for Anals, *Golhang-som* for Khongjais, *Chirap* for Marings, *Khallong* for Thangals, Kalen for Kharams, and *Jolbuk* for Mizos.

8. Maintaining fireplace (*Phunga-mei*) with three stands (*Phunga Nungdum*) is common amongst communities. Just like Meiteis, other communities have a similar system of using three pronged stones for the bases of the hearth. At the left side of a house, water is stored in pitchers. The procedure of *Maiba chingba* of Meitei and hill communities are almost the same. The use of *Meihum-Morok* to spread urgent news of war and attack by animals is also common both amongst people.

9. Like Meiteis, hill communities keep barns adjacent to as well as separate from the house. Marings keep barns at a distance from the house. These barns are kept on raised platforms, or piles.

10. Communities across hills and valley believe in household deities and outdoor deities. Roland Shimmi states that Kabuis, Tangkhuls and Meiteis worship python as a deity. Meiteis regard a particular type of Python as *Pakhangba*, identical to that of a mythical snake in Rulpui Lushai belief. It is also a common practice to perform religious rites with or without animal sacrifice in case of sickness, injury or any crisis that affected a person. Marings bear certain similarities with Meiteis in propitiating spirits. They have practices of *Kannathuy* like Meitei *Thou-touba* to propitiate spirits during illness, pestilence, drought, and *etcetera*. They also keep household deity like *Chimthray*, similar to *Sanamahi* of Meiteis. The Southern Tangkhuls at Kangpat, Nambasi, Lairam Khullen, Phungba, and Kasom Khullen keep a place in the southern side of the house empty for ritual purposes. In the third room of the house, at the corner to the right, space is reserved for a household deity called *Keomeo*, who is like *Sanamahi* of Meiteis. Others term of this deity is *Alha (Amio)* or *Thiruikhong*. This deity is kept at the place of the leader of village or clan *piba*. Lamkangs and Chirus kept a vessel of four bamboos to represent *Sanamahi*. Like the culture of *Shintoism*, Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis believe that divine forces reside in rocks, mountains, rivers, trees, and so on.

11. Meitei festivals of *Cheiraoba* and *Cheitaba* correspond to Tangkhul festival of *Lou-mani*, a term derived from the combination of words, *Lou* (rice field) and *mani* (well or ready). During *Loo-mani* festival Tangkhuls break the branches of *rhus* plants that show the fall of the year. Another festival of Meiteis, *Lou-taba*, is related to the Tangkhul festival of *Loura*, a term derived from the combination of words, *Lou* (rice field) and *ra* (to dig). The festival is to signify preparation for agricultural activities of the current year, and it is celebrated in the last week of February and early March before sowing and seedlings. Tangkhul festival of *Ruingava*, performed during *Chumpha* in early December, heralds the collection of paddies from the granary. This festival corresponds to *Phounou Tamba* or *Chaknoutamba* of Meiteis.

12. Roland Shimmi states that just as the buffalo is a taboo to Moirang clan, there are Tangkhul clans that strictly abstain from eating buffalo meat. The tangkhul custom of not fetching water from certain brooks because of enmity with another village at war is parallel to Moirang custom.

13. The celebration of *Piba* and *Ningol Mawa* (*Ningal Maksha* in some Kuki-Chin dialect) of hill communities are also identical with that of Meiteis. In the societies of Chiru, Kom, and Purum, a daughter's husband plays a prominent part in all socio-religious rites and festivities of his wife's patrilineal household. Among Chirus a daughter's husband is called *Maksha*. The best type of *Maksha* for a man is his daughter's husband and next in order is sister's husband, father's sister's husband, the grandfather's sister's husband and upwards. The husband of the eldest daughter is a chief or senior *Maksha* while that of the next daughter is his assistant. *Maksha* is socially regarded as the representative of in-law's house, and he is responsible for all the virtues and faults of the functions performed under his guidance and supervision at the house of his father-in-law.

14 *Karsul* by some hill communities is *Mukna* (a traditional style of wrestling), and *Khungkap* and *Khengkap* are similar to the indoor game of *Kang* of Meiteis. *Khangkap* is meant for both genders and *Khengkap* exclusively for men. *Mittan* is like Meitei's *Uraobi Tannaba*. *Kang* and *Kangkhill* played by Mao are not different from that of Meiteis. *Kao Phaba*, an episode from Meitei epic *Khamba and Thoibi* epic, is also related to the Anal legend of *Thumkhel* associated with *Kao Phaba*. There are many similarities in the form of dancing, spear dancing, style of singing, and the use of musical instruments like *Pena*. *Pena* is known as *Lang* in Kabui and *Ting Lang* in Tangkhul dialects.

15. Kabuis, Meiteis and many other hill communities share similarities in rituals and ceremonies like *Phanjao Chingba* (carving of bench out of a solid block of timber), which was performed during the reign of Meidingu Mungyangba in 1501CE, *Lou Hongba* (performance of rituals for extraordinary production of paddy), and *Lupung Thonba* (performing rituals at *Mangpham*). Like Tangkhuls and others, Meiteis also perform *U-hongba* (ceremony for the protection of tree). An example is Meitei Leima Sorombi's observance of the ceremony in 1509. The Royal Chronicle *Cheitharol Kumbaba* recorded many occasions of *U Hongba* in the years 1576, 1580, 1588, 1595, 1601, 1610, 1616, 1643, and 1665. During the time of Charairongba (1697-1709), it came to be known as *U-krong Hongba*.

16. Ceremonies relating to childbirth, *Khoiri Naopham Phumba*, *Na-hutpa*, and *Ipan-thaba* are almost identical for Meiteis, Kabuis, Khongjais and other communities. Mao, Maram and some other communities restricted sharpening draggers and other iron tools and pouring of boiling rice into the fire till *IpanThaba* of a newly born baby was over. Restrictions on the marriage of the same *yek* (lineage) are common practice amongst valley and hill communities.

17. Similarities are also found in the languages of hill and valley communities. In literature too more than half of the ancient

literature of Manipur is related to hill-valley relations. Kangjia states that old archaic Manipuri script is a contribution of Tangkhuls. According to a Tangkhul folk story, once an old Tangkhul grandsire gave archaic script to his two sons, one written on a piece of leather to the son who would become Tangkhul, and the other on a piece *Wapram* (a kind of bamboo specially processed for writing purpose) to the son who would become Meitei. Unfortunately, a dog ate the script written on the leather. The script written on the *Wapram* remained in possession of Meiteis, and this is how Meiteis became the long-term users of the script.

18. *Chingkheiol* a form of dance is a gift of Tangkhuls to Manipuri culture. Additionally, there are poems, songs, and stories based on the relationship between hill and valley communities and their problems.

VI. MEITEI KINGS HAVING HILL PEOPLE'S NAME

Roland Shimmi in his book, *Comparative History of the Nagas*, suggested that the names of the first fifteen kings of Manipur from Pakhangba to Yaraba are Tangkhul names. Out of the fifteen, seven are being described as follows.

1. Meidingu Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (33-154 CE): Shimmi states that the name Pakhangba stands for “a well-dressed young man or a young chief with a crown.” In Tangkhul dialect, *Pa* means a pliant piece of bamboo that can also mean a traditional hat of Tangkhul which young men, in general, put on the head on important days and holidays; while *Khang* means to put on the head. He further asserts that Pakhangba entered Manipur valley *via* the source of Iril River where Hundung village is located. The traits like the belief of *mythical snake* and inheritance by the youngest son, both of which are connected to Pakhangba, are parallel to similar traits in Hundung culture.

2. Meidingu KhuyoiTompok (154-264 CE): According to Simmi, in Hundung dialect, *Kha* or *Khu* means village and *yoi* mean to roam. It is the custom of Tangkhuls that a son is named *Khuyoi* if his father roamed about to visit many villages. He further states, that according to Meitei tradition, Pakhangba was a real adventurer who roamed over the vales and dales before his accession to the throne. *Khuyoi* was, therefore, the right name for his son.

3. Meidingu Pengshiba (379-394 CE): In Tangkhul dialect, *Peng* means a rope or a line. *Si* may be a corruption of *sei* or *se*, meaning to prepare or to make. A child can be named *Pengseba* if born on the rope-making day of *Thisam*¹⁵ festival, which generally falls in early January.

4. Meidingu Sameirang (518-568 CE): In Hundung and some other local dialects, *sa* means animal or meat, *mei* means killed or trapped, and *rang* means cut to pieces. According to this, a big jungle animal, such as a stag or a bear, killed or trapped by a chief was cut and divided amongst community when a prince was born. As the name suggests, Sameirang often killed wild animals.

5. Meidingu Khongtekcha (763-773 CE): In Hundung dialect, *khong* means a basin, *tek* means to break, *cha* means half; when used as a verb, *chameans* to split. Shimmi suggests that the name Khongtekcha could have been a posthumous title given to him since he and his sixty-four nobles were drowned during a hunting expedition.

6. Meidingu Yaraba (799-821 CE): *Yarra* is an annual festival of Tangkhuls. *Yar* means a group of villages equal in age, and *ra* means rice beer. The feast is marked by different groups drinking

¹⁵Thisam; celebrated in early January, derived from the words *th* (dead) and *sam* (farewell), i.e., farewell feast of the dead. First day Pengsei signifies rope making by families whose member had died within the past year. Big creepers from jungle, bound animals, that were kept ready to be slaughtered for the dead. Shimmi. 'Comparative History of the Nagas...' pp. 98-99.

and feasting together. It is celebrated before the commencement of busy fieldwork for six days and can be prolonged to two days more. The name *Yaraba* stands for “a man born during Yarra festival.” It can also be a nickname for a person who is fond of feasting and drinking rice beer.

7. Meidingu Ayangba (821-910 CE): Though Manipuri and Tangkhul languages have lost the essence of this word, in Hundung dialect, *ayang* means strength; *Ayangba*, therefore, means the son of a powerful king. Shimmi further asserts that the names of some of Meitei kings like Konthouba and Keirencha show a mixed culture, whereas names like Pengshiba, Kaokhangba and Naokhamba represent a culture of Tangkhul and Khuman. However, names like Khuyoi, Sameirang, Khongtekcha and Ayangba have meanings only in the dialects of Hundung and some select Tangkhul villages. He continued that nowadays most of these ancient names may be unfamiliar to Meiteis, but their Tangkhul origins hint that the lineage of Meiteis can be traced back to Tangkhul community.

VII. HILL COMMUNITIES FOR A UNITED MANIPUR

Hill communities have played commendable roles towards building a united and powerful Manipur. Though it is impossible to note down all the commendable responsibilities, a few instances are cited hereunder.

1. Kabuis and Khongjais believe that the third king of Manipur, Taothingmang (264-365 CE), belonged to their communities. Sameirang (518-568 CE), who ruled Manipur in the 6th century, is claimed to be a Tangkhul as stated above. This thus indicates the possibility of oneness in origin of the communities constituting the people of Manipur. Meidingu Mungyamba (1562-1597) and Meidingu Garibniwaz (1709-1748) are said to be closely related to Anals and Thangals respectively.

2. During the time of Moirang Ningthou Thangtek Soinaiba, Moirang was in grave danger from a man-eater *Paobilai*. Referring to *Paobilai Nongkarol*, Kangjia states that it was Kabui Tomba, the chief of the Kabuis of Thangjing ching, who saved Nongyai Chahui Leirongpanba and the people of Moirang from *Paobilai*. Kabui Salang Maiba played an vital role in the legend of Khamba-Thoibi.

3. Meidingu Garibniwaz (Pamheiba) is said to have been brought up in hills. Though he adopted Hindu *Laining* (religion), he maintained a close relationship with hill communities. During his war campaign against the Burmese, many Tangkhuls, Thangals, Kabuis, Marings and Anals participated. Most of the Kabuis settled at Imphal at present are said to be the descendants of the said warriors. The Burmese invasion of 1723 was fought off by the combined force of hill and valley warriors under the command of Meidingu Garibniwaz. Regarding the event, Gangmumei states that the first encounter between the two forces occurred at Kakching near Pallel. Manipuri detachment under Kabichandra and Puni Singh were out-numbered and defeated by Burmese. They retreated to Wangjing to the north of Kakching. When the king heard about the defeat at Kakching, he realized the gravity of the situation; he sent a reinforcement of a large army consisting of four thousand Manipuri soldiers from hills, five thousand Manipuri Meitei soldiers from valley and three hundred well-trained cavalry armed with deadly *arambai*, with himself at the head of the army. In the fierce fight that followed Manipuris routed the Burmese completely.

4. During the Burmese invasion in 1758-59, Meidingu Maramba¹⁶ (1753-1759, 1761-1763) and many nobles took refuge in hill villages and were assisted by hill communities. While fleeing to Tekhao (Assam) to escape Burmese invasions, Meidingu Chingthangkhomba (1759-1761, 1763-1798) was helped and guided by Mao Maram hillmen. In 1764, during

¹⁶The younger brother of Meidingu Chingthangkhomba (Bheigyachandra).

Burmese invasion, Bhaigyachandra fled to Cachar. Kabui villages helped him and gave him a new name *Chingthangkhopu* to cover up his identity. *Chingthangkhopu* means the one who takes refuge in hills. The warriors of Akhui village repulsed Burmese soldiers witch hunting the king. The royal robes and other belongings like bronze utensils for wine, sword, and etcetera are still kept in a Pamei household of Wairangba (Dilon) village. Also, there is a place known as Taijijang on the western banks of Barak river beyond Bamgaijang village where Meidingu Chingthangkhopu had once halted for some time while fleeing from Burmese. The meaning of Taijijang is “a place where Meiteis slept,” that is, *tai* for Meitei, *ji* for bed, and *jang* for a place or plain area. In 1765 Bheigyachandra was a fugitive in Ahom country. He sought the assistance of Ahom king and arrived at the western hills of Manipur to fight back Burmese. At such a critical juncture the communities assisted him. The event is recorded in *Ahom Buranji*: “The inhabitants of the Naga villages welcomed Joysing [*Bheigyachandra*] and flocked around him. Raja Joysing [*Bheigyachandra*] proceeded with the Nagas towards Manipur and arrived there. Almost all the people of the country welcomed Joysing [*Bheigyachandra*] as their king.”¹⁷ Once the king took refuge at Chasad Kuki village. He was helped by Kuki chief Tonghu and other hill communities.

5. During the Burmese occupation (1819-1826), many hill communities were enrolled in Manipur Levy and helped Gambhir Singh in the occupation and annexation of Badarpur (Cachar). Many Tangkhuls participated in the revolt of Herachandra against Burmese. Shimmi states that there are traditions and lores to tell that Tangkhuls and other Manipuri communities gave Meiteis shelter during this period. Once Gambhir Singh regained sovereignty for Manipur, the Burmese war captives Tailang Kabui and others were brought back and allowed to settle at Nungei as

¹⁷Barua., Rai Sahib Golap Chandra. (1985). *Ahom Buranji*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p. 189.

they wished.¹⁸ They later migrated to Chingkhram and were exempted from taxes. It is also said that some hill communities were involved in the assassination plot of Govindra Chandra, the king of Badarpur, in 1830.

6. In the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891, many from amongst hill communities sacrificed their lives, and some of them were deported to *Kala Pani* (Andaman Islands). Mention may be made of Chirai Naga, Chakami Naga, and Gowho Naga. Chirai Naga was the son of Chunba Naga of Mayangkhang, one of the sections of Koyla or Khoirou Nagas. On receiving a message from Imphal that war had broken out between Manipuris and British at Mayangkhang outpost, Mayangkhang Nagas led by Chirai Naga attacked the rest house where Mr W.B. Melville (Superintendent) and Mr O'Brien (Signaller, Government Telegraph Department) were residing and killed both of them. Chirai Naga was hanged to death on 13th October 1891. Both Chowkami Naga and Gowho Naga were deported to Port Blair in 1891 for their involvement in the attack on Mayangkhang outpost and the assassination of the British Officers.

7. Chasad Kukis sided with the king of Manipur in the Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891. Maharaja Kullachandra, Yubaraj Tikendrajit, Senapati Angousana, and about two hundred nobles and followers took refuge at Chasad Kuki village after being defeated by British. They plotted to go to China for assistance. However, the plan did not materialise due to the betrayal of one Moirang Tonjao, who had disclosed all the secrets of the plan to Brigadier General T. Graham at Pallel. Moirang Tonjao and the British force failed to trace the whereabouts of the fugitive king and his followers due to the support of Chasad chief Tonghu and his community. It is also said that Yubaraj Tikendrajit and

¹⁸When Burmese soldiers were trailing for fugitive Gambhir Singh, on the way to Cachar, they left their elephants behind and asked a man named Tailang Kabui to look after the elephants. While returning, they could not find the elephants. In retaliation many Tailang Kabuis —men, women and children— were taken prisoners to Burma.

Wangkheirakpa had learnt the art of war from the chief of Kwatha village.

8. Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919): Khongjai Gal (Khongjai War) of 1917-1919 was a revolt in open defiance of British authority. According to Joykumar, the rebellion was caused by the negative fallout of political, economic and administrative changes that the British had introduced since the occupation of Manipur in 1891. The immediate cause of the war was the recruitment of Kukis to send to France to serve as coolies during the First World War. A meeting of Kuki chiefs was held at Jampi village in which the chiefs expressed unhappiness at the action imposed by the colonial and feudal authorities. Chengjapao (chief of Asian village), Ngulkhup (chief of Mombi village), and Ngulbul (chief of Longja) took a leading role at the initial stage of the revolt. One plainsman, Chingakham Sanajaoba, who was believed to have possessed supernatural powers, joined hands with Kukis and he had played an important role in the outbreak of the rebellion. He gave the message that British Raj was coming to an end. The flame of the rebellion spread like wildfires to the four major hill areas, namely, Jampi, Henglep, Mombi and Chasad. Some important Kuki leaders who actively participated in the rebellion were; TintongHaokip of Lajiang, Enjakhup Lholhou of Thenjang, and Khontintang Sitlhou of Sangnao. The rebellion was suppressed in 1919, and the rebels were either arrested or forced to surrender. The Kuki rebellion stands as a testimony to the patriotism of the Kukis, and the strong tie that existed between the people of the hills and valley in an emergency.

9. Zeliangrong Movement (1930-32): In the beginning, the Zeliangrong movement led by Jadonang¹⁹ was a socio-religious movement directed against spreading Christianity around them. In the course of time, the movement incorporated a political tone and

¹⁹Jadonang, third son of Thudai Rongmei by his second wife Tabonliu, was born in 1901, at a Rongmei village Puilun (Kambiron), about 140 Kms from Imphal.

towards freedom from colonial rule and social emancipation from feudal oppression and exploitation. The reasons were the challenge posed by the alien British colonial rule and the apathy towards Zeliangrong communities during and after the Kuki rebellion (917-1919). Zeliangrongs were (1) opposed to the policy of forced conscription to labour corps, and (2) against the imposition of Hill House Tax and feudal duties like *Pothang Senkhai* and *Pothang Bekari*. Jadonang became a leader and was prepared to fight against the British in 1929 by abolishing the foreign rule with his headquarters at Puilon (Kambiron). The movement spread far and wide and covered almost all the Zaliangrong inhabited areas. In defiance of the established rule, Jadonang started collecting taxes. Apart from this he also told the people not to obey the law of the colonial government, and thus all the government machinery was paralysed. To suppress the movement Government decided to arrest Jadonang. It was at this juncture that an unfortunate incident had occurred at Puilon in March 1930, where a mob lynched four Manipuri Meitei betel nut traders for violating a *genna* known as *Dinei*.²⁰ It is said that during the occurrence of the incident, Jadonang was away at Nungkao (Lonkao), the native village of Gaidinliu that was located to the west of Barak River, to meet a person named Lothonnang. Taking this opportunity Government framed charges against Jadonang and he was arrested on 19th Feb, 1931,²¹ at Cachar while he was returning with his associates Gaidinliu and others from Bhubon Cave. Thereafter Political Agent of Manipur, Mr Higgins extradited Jadonang to Imphal on 29th March 1931. He was criminalised and hanged to death on Saturday, 29th August 1931, at 6.00 am at Imphal Jail. After the death of Jadonang, the leadership of the movement passed into the hands of Gaidinliu.

²⁰Rongmei custom: entry of outsiders into the village and use of fire prohibited during *genna*. Mob led by Lulungpu lynched four Meitei traders for violating the prohibitions. Rongmei., G. Makunga. (1994). Introduction to Rongmei Nagas. Imphal. p. 127.

²¹Jadonang; arrested at Cachar on 8th March, 1931. Ref. N. Joykumar Singh Singh., N. Joykumar. (1992). Social Movements in Manipur (1917-1951). New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 62.

12. Many hill communities, particularly Kabuis, who settled in and around Imphal, played crucial roles in the *Nupi Lal* (women's uprising) of 1939. Mention may be made of Ludallu (Talu) and Chingamlu of Kakhullong, Ngoubi and Namthanlong of Majorkhul, and Kalilun of Muchikhul.

There can be many more records that would inform contribution by hill communities. History is replete with individual efforts, community contributions, overt and covert participation in sporadic resistances and coordinated collective mass democratic assertions to liberate from domination by external forces and to promote fabric of common interests and shared existence. The most significant and glaring examples of collective effort towards building a united Manipur were displayed at the critical juncture of the mid-twentieth century. People across communities and regional affiliations played active roles in the struggle for a common responsible government. It led to the transformation of polity into a parliamentary democracy that subsequently ensured everyone equal constitutional and legal footings and the democratic right to form a popular government. This is being somehow discussed in the previous Chapter 6, Section II. In the subsequent decades that followed, people are united in the struggle for civil, political, economic, cultural, and indigenous rights. The strong bond of unity and the vision of a united Manipur has been deep-rooted, and these objective and subjective conditions could withstand the challenges created by forces of sectarianism and disintegration in the early decades of the 21st century.

VIII MERA HAICHONGBA ORGANISED FESTIVAL OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Shared responsibilities and shared existence are reflected in the functional mechanism of institutions and organised festivals. First, various loishangs (departments), designated offices and posts, and coveted privileges or awards of excellence were created. Coveted

privileges or awards of excellence were not restricted to a particular community. Regarding privileges enjoyed by those from hill communities, Ibobi Singh states, *Haomacha Loishang* was very helpful to the king. The in-charge of this department had the privilege of attending the king even inside the palace. It was a privilege enjoyed by a few exceptional at a certain stage of historical time. In *Loiyumba Sinyel*, this department is recorded as *Haopanba* under the in-charge of *Haopanba Purel*. *Haopanba Purel* could enjoy the privilege of riding a palanquin up to Chingmeirong in the north, Chinga in the south, Langjing in the west, and Khomidok in the east. Apoimacha Latna, a *Loishang Guru* of Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652), was a hill man. During the time of Meidingu Garibniwaz (1709-1748) one Apoinana,²² a great *Maichou* (learned man) of Garibniwaz's period was a Kabui. Nongthonba Kabui Wathinba was a noble at the court.²³ *Chothe Khullakpa* enjoyed palanquin privilege and was allowed to ride in a palanquin up to Mongshangei.²⁴ In another account, *Chothe Khullakpa* was allowed to ride in a palanquin up to Moirangkhom. *Chiru Khullakpa* and *Noney Khullakpa* also enjoyed the privilege of palanquin. During the time of Meidingu Chingthangkhomba (1759-1761 CE, 1763-1798 CE), Nungsong Hao was a noble. *Nongpok Thonglen Ngakpa Khoibu Senapati* and *Hundung Thawaijao* were respected noblemen. Noblemen, as well as ordinary persons from hills, took part in royal *Hiyang Tanaba* (boat race), which was the most significant festival. These are being mentioned in *Cheitharol Kumbaba*: boat race of Luhuppa Hao (Tangkhol hillmen) and Kharam Hao (Kharam hillmen) in 1782, and another one in 1810 which was won by Marings.

Second, the festival of Mera Haochongba, *that is*, literally a festival of *haos* (hill communities) in the month of *Mera*,

²²Who is credited for explaining the script of *Wakoklon Thirel Salai Amailol Pukok*.

²³Ibungohal., Lairelmayum and Khelchandra., Ningthoukhongjam (1967) *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. Imphal: Manipur Sahitya Parisad. p. 116.

²⁴Khelchandra., Ningthoukhongjam. (1987). *Phamlon*. Imphal: Manipur Sahitya Parishad. p. 9.

(October-November) became a tradition. Before going further, it worth to briefly mention the etymology of the term *hao* as incorporated in the tradition of Haochongba.

One needs to understand the meaning of the term *hao* as reflected in *Haochongba* festival. Etymologically, *hao* is an old Meitei term that connotes positive meaning such as good or tasty, *i.e.*, *good* without prefix *a* and suffix *ba*—example, *leihao* for champak and *chak-hao* for a good variety of black rice. Subsequently, the term became generally applied to hill communities. According to Paojailung Thaomei, those who originated from Mahou were collectively known as Hao. The land bounded by the hills is also known as Haorei, such as haorei-kha (south), and haorei-awang (north). Kangjiya Mangang says that the word *hao* is derived from Kabui word *hao* (hills). Ibohal Singh believes that the ancient people of Haokap Chingsang, Khunpham, and Ngangcheng were generally called *Hao*. One hundred *Hao* families settled at the southern hills, and that Lei-hou and Ma-hou of Tangkhul, belonged to *Hou*. According to Ibohal Singh, prefixes such as *Lei* and *Ma* in *Lei-hou* and *Ma-hou* appear to be the name of the places where Hao inhabited in *Leinung* area or the names of the communities themselves. It is also believed that *hao* is derived from the name of Suhte king Kam-hao Sukte and his followers came to be known as *Haos*. Whichever the origin may be, the term *hao* had been applied to the name of Meitei deities, kings, and queens. Examples are: mother of king Pakhangba (33-154 CE) was Inung *Haoba* Chanu; wife of king Taothingmang (264-364) was *Haonukhu*; wives of king Kainou Irengba (984-1074) were *Haoreima-Tamheibi* and *Haoreima Pidongnu Phabi*; Meitei deities had the following names, such as, *Haoreima Sampubi* (Nongthang Leima), *Haosem Nuraba/Nurabi*, *Haokurangba Chanu*, and so on; Meitei had the following surnames (sageis or lineage), such as, *Haobam*, *Haodeijam*, *Haobijam*, *Haorongbam*, *Haooibam*, *Haorokcham*; a component of Meitei was originally *Haokha-Lokha*.

Mera Haochongba was a festival instituted under the monarchy and celebrated by dignitaries from across communities, at Kangla on the tenth day of Meitei lunar month of Mera (October-November).²⁵ Originally, it is believed, the festival was introduced by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. It was also known as *Mera Ukai-phalang Kappa*. The location of the festival was, according to Khelchandra, on the western side of *Kangla-sa* at *Utra-mamang* of the Old Palace, north-west of *Lakthong*, and southwest of *Nungoibi*. Originally, prestigious animal *Sandangs* (Mithun) were sacrificed at *Nungoibi* and its meat cooked and served to those who could consume it.²⁶ It was a festival under royal patronage attended by the king, nobles, and dignitaries from across communities and regions who attended the festival with respectively ornamented 'traditional' attire thereby making it apparently a total of the cultural mosaic. Predominant features of the festival were an exchange of gifts, presentation of songs and dances, and organisation of games, sports, feasts and merry making. Kitchens were organized, and different items of food were prepared to suit with different dietary habits. The festival marked an enduring tradition state patronage of organic composition of communities, co-existence, socio-cultural tolerance, religious secularism, and common political vision.

IX SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

If Manipur had to be interpreted as an organic entity of community compartments, Chapter 6, Sections II and III had shown that none of the communities (valley and hill communities) was completely isolated from one another, but was, at varying degrees, brought under a framework of governance that was pursued by an expanding institution of monarchy. The communities were constituted into an organic feature and were not merely administered but also had contributed to the making of

²⁵Some consider it on the fifteenth day of *Mera Thanil* (full moon of the month of October).

²⁶Meitei day *Mera Sanduba* was derived from this event, that is san (sandang/mithun) and duba (corrupted from tuba, which means fallen.)

shared responsibility. The etymologies, concepts, composition and functional aspects of *Loiyumba Sinyel*, *Haomacha Loisang*, *Lallup*, *Lakpa*, *Lambu*, and so on speak a lot about it. Perhaps, the institution of monarchy prior to the evolution of parliamentary democracy had reached a particular phase of absolutism when it had functioned like a mechanical machinery where the King seated at Kangla²⁷ was the ultimate centre of power; he who conducted the affairs of administration with the assistance of co-opted subordinates of various grades who were being chosen by the king himself on the basis of merit irrespective of community and regional backgrounds. Power cannot evolve without a material base of production, an organisation of labour and management of accumulation of wealth. Power, therefore, was an aggregate sum of the overall productive relations derived from and inclusive of the communities who had descended from—Aimol, Anal, Angom Nongpal/Nongbal, Bamon, Chakpa, Changlei-Thangyi, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Kege-Moirang (*Iwang, Kege, Khuyon, Kouba, and Nangoi*), Khaba-Nganba, Kharam, Khuman-Nongyai (*Heirem-Khunjan, Khayoi/Kharoi, Mayang-Thongnang, Nongyai*), Koirao (Thangal), Koireng, Kom, Lamkang, Liangmei Luhuppa-Tangkul, Lushai, Mao-Maram, Maring, Mate, Mizo, Moyon, Nungpan/Luwang, Paite, Pangal, Paomai, Poirei-Wangam-Ningthouja, Purum, Rongmei, Tarao, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zeme and Zou. Manipur created by them continued to function under a mechanism of shared responsibility derived from the wills of the people at the grass root. The people collectively decide the fate of Manipur.

²⁷Shimmi asserts, word kangla seemed to have derived from Tangkhal word Kalangshim, i.e., combination of *ka* (to go up or step in), *lang* (to mend or adjust), and *shim* (house), which denoted the highest court of appeal. Shimmi. *Comparative History of the Nagas...* p. 86.

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APPENDIX

PROPOSALS UNDER ANGLO-MANIPURI TREATY, 1762

Proposals made by Anund Sah, Podullo Singh and Chitton Singh Hazarry in the name and behalf of Goursah Singh, Raja of Meckley for an explanation of a former treaty of alliance bearing date the 14th September 1762 made by Hurry Dass Gussein on behalf of Jai Singh and Harry Verelst etc. Gentlemen of Chittagong (Home Department, Public Proceedings Volume 1763, Pages 1330-1331).

I, Goursah Singh, Raja of Meckley do confirm a treaty of alliance dated the 14th September 1762 made between Harry Verelst, Randolf Marriot and Thomas Rumbold in behalf of the Honourable East India Company on one part and by Hurry Dass Gussein in the name and behalf of my brother Joy Singh, on the other part, approving and ratifying all and every article of the said treaty of alliance.

The second article of the said treaty stipulates all and every expense and contingent expenses of the said English troops employed in the service of my brother Joy Singh to be paid by him at the immediate expiration of every month.

To this I am to observe that since the Burmese have overrun and destroyed a great part of the Dominions of Meckley, it is not in my power to make such payments in actual species either of gold or silver.

But I agree to pay all such expenses as have already accrued in the English late march towards Meckley and all such expenses as hereafter may accrue in their future march to Meckley to be paid from time to time in such goods and merchandise as are procurable in my country and which I agree to deliver to the English at Raung Roong at their annexed rates and conditions but such quantities as are specified in the annexed lists shall be delivered as the first payment immediately on the English troops getting up to Meckley. And I am now willing to pay in ready money towards this agreement, hundred Meckley gold Rupees to be valued at twelve silver rupees each.

So soon as the English shall enable me to work the gold mine on the banks of the River Barrampooter in the Dominions of

Meckley, as well as any other mines of gold, silver, lead, iron, tin, copper, precious stones and mines of all kinds whatever now known or what hereafter may be discovered in Meckley, I am willing and agreed to pay all expenses in the working of the said mines; and also to give the English--three fourths of the products of the same towards defraying the general expense of their troops in my employ.

Which products with my goods and merchandise I agree to pay them from time to time, till the whole expense of their assisting me is discharged. When and on all accounts between us being settled and adjusted I am then to be released from any such further stipulated payments. But hereby I agree that the said English are to reside in Meckley as merchants, on the full terms and privileges as stipulated in the aforementioned treaty of the 14th September 1762.

In testimony whereof we have put our signs manual in Islambad this day of first day of September 1685 Sauk Bengal style or the eleventh day of September 1763 English style.

Products of Meckley that Goursah Singh, Rajah agrees to pay annually towards the defrayment of the expenses of the English troops employed on his account viz.,

Silk 10 mds at	5 Rupees	per seer..	Rs.	2,000
Iron	1,000 "	Rs. 4 per md..	Rs.	4,000
Copal	1,000 "	Rs. 1½ " "	Rs.	1,500
Dammar	1,000 "	Rs. 1½ " "	Rs.	1,500
Wood oil	1,000 "	Rs. 1½ " "	Rs.	1,500
Wax	500 "	Rs. 20 " "	Rs.	10,000
Elephant teeth	100 mds at	Rs. 20 " "	Rs.	2,000
Agar	100 " "	Rs. 4 " seer	Rs.	16,000
Camphor	10 " "	Rs. 80 per md	Rs.	800
Black thread	100 " "	Rs. 20 " "	Rs.	2,000
Red thread	100 " "	Rs. 20 " "	Rs.	2,000

Blue thread	100	" "	Rs. 20	" "	Rs. 2,000
White thread	200	" "	Rs. 20	" "	Rs. 4,000
Black coss	10	" "	Rs. 20 per seer		Rs. 800

Meckley cloth from
2½ to 3 cubits 500 pcs Rs. 1½ per piece Rs.750
broad and a cubit
long

Meckley gold 500 12 silver rupees Rs.6,000
Rupee each

Total Rs.56,850

Out of the above, Goursah Singh can now give within the period of one month after the arrival of the troops at Raung Roong.

Silk	5	Mds
Iron	500	"
Copal	500	"
Dammar	500	"
Wax	250	"
Elephant teeth	50	"
Agar	20	"
Black thread	50	"
Red thread	50	"
Blue thread	50	"
White thread	100	"
Meckley clothes	500	pieces
Meckley gold rupees	150	

Treaty of Yandaboo, 24 February 1826

TREATY of PEACE between the HONORABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY on the one part, and HIS MAJESTY the KING of AVA on the other, settled MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL, K.C.B., and K.C.T.S., COMMANDING the EXPEDITION, and SENIOR COMMISSIONER in PEGU and AVA; THOMAS CAMPBELL ROBERTSON, ESQ., CIVIL COMMISSIONER in PEGU and AVA; and HENRY DUCIE CHAD, ESQ., CAPTAIN, COMMANDING BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S and the HONORABLE COMPANY'S NAVAL FORCE the IRRAWADDY RIVER, on the part of the Honorable Company; and by MENGYEE-MAHA-MEN-KYAN-TEN WOONGYEE, LORD of LAYKAING, and MENGYEE-MARA-HLAH-THUO-HAH-THOO-ATWEN-WOON, LORD of the REVENUE, on the part of the King of Ava; who have each communicated to the other their full powers, agreed to and executed at Yandaboo in the Kingdom of Ava, on this Twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six, corresponding with the Fourth day of the decrease of the Moon Taboung, in the year One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty-seven Gaudma Era, 1826.

ARTICLE 1.

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honorable Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other.

ARTICLE 2.

His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty States of Cachar and Jyntia. With regard to Munnipoor it is stipulated, that should Ghumbheer Sing desire to return to that country, he shall be recognized by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof.

ARTICLE 3.

To prevent all future disputes respecting the boundary line between the two great Nations, the British Government will retain the conquered Provinces of Arracan, including the four divisions of Arracan, Ramree, Cheduba, and Sandoway, and His Majesty the King of Ava cedes all right thereto. The Unnoupectoumien or Arakan Mountains (known in Arakan by the name of the Yeomatoung or Pokhingloun Range) will henceforth form the boundary between the two great Nations on that side. Any doubts regarding the said line of demarcation will be settled by Commissioners appointed by the respective governments for that purpose, such Commissioners from both powers to be of suitable and corresponding rank.

ARTICLE 4.

His Majesty the King of Ava cedes to the British Government the conquered Provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, and Mergui and Tenasserim, with the islands and dependencies thereunto appertaining, taking the Salween River as the line of demarcation on that frontier; any doubts regarding their boundaries will be settled as specified in the concluding part of Article third.

ARTICLE 5.

In proof of the sincere disposition of the Burmese Government to maintain the relations of peace and amity between the Nations, and as part indemnification to the British Government for the expenses of the War, His Majesty the King of Ava agrees to pay the sum of one crore of Rupees.

ARTICLE 6.

No person whatever, whether native or foreign, is hereafter to be molested by either party, on account of the part which the map have taken or have been compelled to take in the present war.

ARTICLE 7.

In order to cultivate and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two governments, it is agreed that accredited ministers, retaining an escort or safeguard of fifty men, from each shall reside at the Durbar of the other, who shall be permitted to purchase, or to build a suitable place of residence, of permanent materials ; and a Commercial Treaty, upon principles of reciprocal advantage, will be entered into by the two high contracting powers.

ARTICLE 8.

All public and private debts contracted by either government, or by the subjects of either government, with the others previous to the war, to be recognized and liquidated upon the same principles of honour and good faith as if hostilities had not taken place between the two Nations, and no advantage shall be taken by either party of the period that may have elapsed since the debts were incurred, or in consequence of the war ; and according to the universal law of Nations, it is further stipulated, that the property of all British subjects who may die in the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava., shall, in the absence of legal heirs, be placed in the hands of the British Resident or Consul in the said dominions, who will dispose of the same according to the tenor of the British law. In like manner the property of Burmese subjects dying under the same circumstances, in and part of the British dominions, shall be made over to the minister or other authority delegated by His Burmese Majesty to the Supreme Government of India.

ARTICLE 9.

The King of Ava will abolish all exactions upon British ships or vessels in Burman ports, that are not required from Burmah ships or vessels in British port nor shall ships or vessels, the property of British subjects, whether European or Indian, entering the Rangoon River or other Burman ports, be required to land their guns, or unship their rudders, or to do any other act not required of Burmese ships or vessels in British ports.

ARTICLE 10.

The good and faithful Ally of the British Government, His Majesty the King of Siam, having taken a part in the present War, will, to the fullest extent, as far as regards His Majesty and his subjects, be included in the above Treaty.

ARTICLE 11.

This Treaty to be ratified by the Burmese authorities competent in the like cases, and the Ratification to be accompanied by all British, whether Europe or Native, American, and other prisoners, who will be delivered over to the British Commissioners ; the British Commissioners on their part engaging that the said Treaty shall be ratified by the Right Honorable the Governor-General in Council, and the Ratification shall be delivered to His Majesty the King of Ava in four months, or sooner if possible, and all the Burmese prisoners shall, in like manner be delivered over to their own Government as soon as they arrive from Bengal.

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL.

LARGEEN MEONJA,

Woonghee.

T. C. ROBERTSON, Civil Commissioner.

SEAL OF THE LOTOO.

HY. D. CHADS,

Captain, Royal Navy.

SHWAGUM WOON,

Atawoon.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE.

The British Commissioners being most anxiously desirous to manifest the sincerity of their wish for peace, and to make the immediate execution of the fifth Article of this Treaty as little irksome or inconvenient as possible to His Majesty the King of Ava, consent to the following arrangements, with respect to the division of the sum total, as specified in the Article before referred

to, into instalments, viz., upon the payment of twenty-five lacks of Rupees, or one-fourth of the sum total (the other Articles of the Treaty being executed), the Army will retire to Rangoon. Upon the further payment of a similar sum at that place within one hundred days from this date, with the proviso as above, the Army will evacuate the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava with the least possible delay, leaving the remaining moiety of the sum total to be paid by equal annual instalments in two years, from this Twenty-fourth day of February 1826 A.D., through the Consul or Resident in Ava or Pegu, on the part of the Honorable the East India Company.

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL.

LARGEEN MEONJA,

Woongee.

T. C. ROBERTSON, Civil Commissioner.

SEAL OF THE LOTOO

HY. D. CHADS,

Captain, Royal Navy.

SHWWAGUM WOON,

Atawoon

Ratified by the Governor-General in Council, at Fort William in Bengal, this Eleventh day of April, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six.

AMHERST.

COMBERMERE.

J. H. HARINGTON.

W. B. BAYLEY

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN RAJAH GUMBHEER SINGH
AND COMMISSIONER F.J. GRANT, 1833**

The Governor-General and the Supreme Council of Hindoostan declare as follows: With regard to the two ranges of Hills, the one called the Kalanaga Range, and the other called the Noon-jai Range, which are situated between the eastern bend of the Barak and the western bend of the Barak, we will give up all claim on the part of the Honourable Company thereunto, and we will make these Hills over in possession to the Rajah, and give him the line of the Jeeree and the western bend of the Barak as a boundary, provided that the Rajah agrees to the whole of what is written in the paper, which is as follows:

1. The Rajah will, agreeably to instructions received, without delay, remove his Thanna from Chundrapore, and establish it on the eastern bank of the Jeeree.
2. The Rajah will in no way obstruct the trade carried on between the two countries by Bengali or Munnipori merchants. He will not exact heavy duties, and he will make a monopoly of no articles of merchandise whatsoever.
3. The Rajah will in no way prevent the Nagas inhabiting the Kalanaga and Noonjai Ranges of Hills, from selling or bartering ginger, cotton, pepper, and every other article, the produce of their country, in the Plains of Cachar, at the Banskandee and Oodharban bazaars, as has been their custom.
4. With regard to the road commencing from the eastern bank of Jeeree and continued via Kalanaga and Kowpoom, as far as the Valley of Munnipore-after this road has been finished, the Rajah will keep it in repairs, so as to enable laden bullocks to pass during the cold and dry seasons. Further, at the making of the road, if British officers be sent to examine or superintend the same, the Rajah will agree to everything these officers may suggest.
5. With reference to the intercourse already existing between the territories of the British Government and those of the Rajah, if the intercourse be further extended, it will be well

in every respect, and it will be highly advantageous to both the Rajah and his country. In order, therefore, that this may speedily take place, the Rajah, at the requisition of the British Government, will furnish a quota of Nagas to assist at the construction of the road.

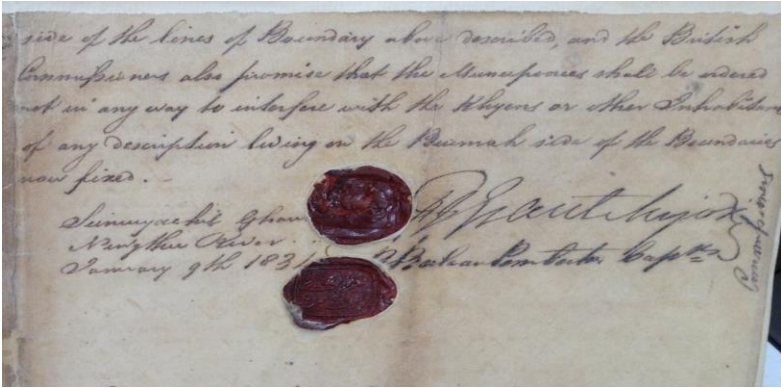
6. In the event of war with the Burmese, if troops be sent to Munnipore, either to protect that country, or to advance beyond the Ningthee, the Rajah at the requisition of the British Government, will provide hill porters to assist in transporting the ammuniton and baggage of such troops.
7. In the event of anything hppening on the Eastern Frontier of the British territories, the Rajah will, when required, assist the British Government with a portion of his troops.
8. The Rajah will be answerable for all the ammuniton he receives from the British Government, and will, for the information of the British Government, give in every month a statement of expenditure to the British Officer attach to the levy.

SEAL

I, Shree Joot Gumbheer Singh of Munnipore, agree to all that is written above in this paper sent by the Supreme Council.

Dated 18th April 1833

Signed and sealed in my presence (Signed) F.J. Grant, Commissioner	(A true translation) (Signed) Geo. Gorden, Lieut., Adjutant, Gumbheer Singh's Levy (Signed) Shree Joot Rajah Gumbheer Sing
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AGREEMENT REGARDING THE KABO VALLEY – 1834

First: The British Commissioners, Major Grant and Captain Pemberton, under instruction from the Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council, agree to make over to the Woondouk Mahamingyan Raja and Tsaradangiees Myoookyawthoo, Commissioners appointed by the King of Ava, the towns of Tummoo, Khumbat, Sumjok, and all other villages in the Kubo Valley, the Ungoching Hills and the strip of valley running between their eastern foot and the western bank of the Ningthee Khyendwen River.

Second: The British Commissioners will withdraw the Muneepooree Thannas now stationed within this tract of country and make over immediate possession of it to the Burmese Commissioners on certain conditions.

Third: The conditions are, that they will agree to the boundaries which may be pointed out to them by the British Commissioners, and will respect and refrain from any interference direct or indirect, with the people residing on the Muneepooree side of those boundaries.

Fourth: The boundaries are as follows:

1. The eastern foot of the chain of mountains which rise are immediately from the western side of the plain of the Kubo Valley. Within this line is included Moreh and all the country to the westward of it.

2. On the south, a line, extending from the eastern foot of the same hills at the point where the river, called by the Burmahs, Nansaweng, and by the Muneepoorees Numsaee lung, enters the plain, up to its sources and across the hills due west down to the Kathe Khyoung (Muneepooree River).
3. On the north the line of boundary will begin at the foot of the same hills at the northern extremity of the Kubo valley, and pass due north up to the first range of hills, east of that upon which stand the villages of Choetar, Nungbree, Nungbrees, of the tribe called by the Muneepoorees Loohooppa, and by the Burmahs Lagwensoung, now tributary to Muneepoor.

Fifth: The Burmese Commissioners hereby promise that they will give orders to the Burmese officers, who will remain in the charge of the territory now made over to them, not in any way to interfere with the Khyens or other inhabitants living on the Munneepoor side of the lines of boundary above described, and the British Commissioners also promised that the Munneepoorees shall be ordered not in any way to interfere with the Khyens or other inhabitants of any description living on the Burma side of the boundaries now fixed.

(Seal) Sd/- F.J. Grant, Major

(Seal) Sd/- R.B. Pemberton, Capt.,

Sumyachil Ghaut, Ningthee River, Commissioners. 9th January, 1834

**AGREEMENT REGARDING COMPENSATION FOR THE
KUBO VALLEY, 1834**

Major Grant and Captain Pemberton, under instructions from the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in-Council, having made over the Kubo valley to the Burmese Commissioners deputed from Ava, are authorised to state:

1. That it is the intention of the Supreme Government to grant a monthly stipend of five hundred Sicca Rupees to the Rajah of Muneepoore, to commence from the ninth day of January, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-four, the date at which the transfer of Kubo took place, as shown in the Agreement mutually signed by the British and Burmese Commissioners.

2. It is to be distinctly understood that should any circumstances hereafter arise by which the portion of territory lately made over to Ava again reverts of Muneepoore, the allowance now granted by the British Government will cease from the date of such reversion.

(Signed)
F.J. Grant, Major

(Signed)
R. Boileu Pemberton, Captain
Commissioners,
Langthabal Muneepoore,
January 25th, 1834

**BOUNDARY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE UNION OF BURMA**

Rangoon, 10 March 1967

The Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Union of Burma,

‘BEARING in mind the friendly relations existing between the two countries,

FIRMLY believing that the formal delimitation and demarcation of the entire traditional boundary between the Republic of India and the Union of Burma will further strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries,

HAVE agreed as follows:

Article I

The Contracting Parties agree that the following shall be the description of the boundary between the Republic of India and the Union of Burma beginning from its southern extremity and ending at its northern extremity:

The southern extremity of the India-Burma boundary is about 1/2 mile south of the triangulation station Reng Tlang. From this point the boundary runs in a general northeasterly direction along the divide separating the waters of the Tuichong from those of the Kola Chaung or Sekul Lui to a point just west of the source of a nameless feeder of the Varang Lui; thence in an easterly direction down the midstream of this nameless feeder to its junction with the Varang Lui, thence down the midstream of the Varang Lui to its junction with the Kola Chaung or Sekul Lui, thence up the midstream of the Kola Chaung or Sekul Lui to its junction with

the Zocha Lui; thence up the midstream of the Zocha Lui to its source on the Samang Tlang range; thence across the range to the source of the Samak of Kwiman Lui, thence down the midstream of the Samak or Kwiman Lui to the Kaladan River, thence across the Kaladan River to the mouth of the Khangza lui and up the midstream of the Khangza Lui to its source in the Tlang to the source of the Rale (Shweleik) Lui; thence down the midstream of the Rale (Shweleik) Lui to its junction with the Sala Lui; thence up to the midstream of the Sala Lui to its junction with the Khenkhontg (Kaikheu) Lui; thence up the midstream of the Khenkhong (Kaikheu) Lui to a point on the Pathian Klang range approximately 700 yards north of height 4146; thence generally northwards along this range to the source of the Para Lui and down the midstream of the Para Lui to its junction with the Tisi Va or Mi Chaung; thence up the midstream of this river to its junction with the Kimung Va of Kheimu Lui; thence up the midstream of the Kimung Va or Kheimu Lui to its source on the Kashia Klang to the source of the Raphu Va; thence down the midstream of the Raphu Va to its junction with the Boinu or Tuipui river; thence down the midstream of the Boinu or Tuipui river to its junction with the Tyao or Tio Va river; thence up the midstream of the Tyao or Tio Va river to its source on a saddle marked by Boundary Pillar No. 3 L/CH; thence across that saddle to the source of the Bapi Va and down the midstream of the Bapi Va to its junction with the Timang Va or Tuimang river; thence down the midstream of the Timang Va or Tuimang river to its junction with the Tuisa river; thence down the midstream of the Tuisa river to its junction with the Tuivai river; thence up the stream; thence up the midstream of the Tuikui stream to its source below Boundary Pillar No.8 situated on a saddle about 4-1/2 miles east of Lunglen Hill. From Boundary Pillar No.8, the boundary runs down the midstream of a nameless feeder of the Tuimong Lui to its junction with the Tuimong Lui, thence down the midstream of the Tuimong Luito its junction with the Tuivel river; thence up the midstream of the Tuivel river to its junction with the Tuinuam Lui; thence up the midstream of the Tuinuam Lui to a saddle where Boundary Pillar No. 7 is located; thence down the

midstream of Paiphum Lui; thence up a ridge; thence to its junction with the Tuival Lui and thence down the midstream of a nameless stream to its junction with the Tuival Lui and thence down the midstream of the Tuival Lui to its junction with the Sumtui Lui; thence up the midstream of the Sumtui Lui to its source on Leng Tang range where Boundary Pill No. 6 is located; thence in an easterly direction down to a neless feeder of the (Tuita) Tuitha or (Kuga) Khuga river; thence down the midstream of this feeder to its junction with the (Tuita) Tuitha or (Kuga) Khuga river; thence up the midstream of the (Tuita) Tuitha or (Kuga) Khuga river to its junction with the Chalao Loam or Chika stream; thence along the midstream of this stream up a ravine to Boundary Pillar No. 5; thence down the midstream of the Yangkau Lok to its junction with the Manipur River; thence northwards up the left bank of the Manipur River to its junction with the Yangdung Lui; thence up the midstream of this stream to its source marked by Boundary Pillar No.3; thence generally northeastwards to height 7582; thence generally eastwards along the watershed between the tributaries of the Manipur River on the one hand and the tributaries of the Chindwin River on the other hand to the source of the Khengyoi Dung and marked by Boundary Pillar 2 and 1; thence down the midstream of the Khengyoi Dung and the Tuisa Dung to Boundary Pillar No.39 on the left bank of the Tuisa Dung; thence generally eastwards for approximately 400 yards along the left bank of the Tuisa Dung; thence northwards up the midstream of a nameless feeder to Boundary Pillar No. 38 on Nat Taung Hill; thence generally northwards down the slope of the hill to a ravine; thence generally eastwards along the bed of the stream to where Boundary Pill No. 37 is located; thence in a general northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 36 and thence in the same direction to Boundary Pill No. 35 located on the right bank of the Auktaung Chaung; thence down the midstream of the Auktaung Chaung to Boundary Pillar No. 34 on the left bank of the Auktaung Chaung; thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 33 located on the left bank of the Tiwan Lam or Tuiwang Dung; thence in a north-northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 32 located on the

right bank of the Tiddim Dung or Naneka Chaung; thence in a north-northeasterly direction to Boundary Pill No. 31; thence in a north-northwesterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 30; thence in a northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 29 located on the left bank of the Rangkep Lok; thence down the midstream of the same stream for a distance of approximately 1 mile to Boundary Pillar No. 28 also located on the left bank of the Rangkep Lok; thence in a north-northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 27; thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 26 located about 500 yards from the right bank of the Pantha Chaung; thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 25 located on the left bank of the Nanpalaung Chaung; thence in a northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 24 located about 400 yards from the left bank of the Chaungngyinaung Chaung; thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 23 located on the right bank of the Lokehao River or Chaunggyi Chaung; thence down the midstream of this river for about a mile to Boundary Pillar No. 22; thence in a north-northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 21; thence in the same direction to Boundary Pillar No. 20; located on the right bank of a tributary of the Chaunggyi Chaung; thence in the same direction to Boundary Pillar No. 19 located approximately 1 mile southeast of Laiching peak trigonometrical station; thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 18 located on the right bank of the Manjet Lok; thence in an easterly direction to Boundary Pillar No.17; thence in a northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 16 located about 700 yards from the South bank of the Waksu Lok or Wetyu Chaung; thence in a northwesterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 15 on the left bank of the Waksu Lok or Wetyu Chaung; thence in a northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 14; thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 13 located about half a mile south of the Tuiyang or Nantisin Chaung; thence in a northwesterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 12 located on the left bank of the Tuiyang or Nantisin Chaung; thence in a northeasterly direction to Boundary Pill No. 11, thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 10 located on the right bank of the Taret River or Nantalet Chaung; thence due east to

Boundary Pillar No.9; thence in a north-northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 8 located on the right bank of the Yu river; thence across the Yu river to Boundary Pillar No. 7 which is located on the left bank of the Yu river opposite Boundary Pillar No. 8, thence in a northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 6; thence in the same direction to Boundary Pillar No. 5 which is located almost north of height 1192; thence in a north-northeasterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 4 located on height 1226; thence in a northerly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 3; thence in a north northwesterly direction to Boundary Pillar No. 2 located on the right bank of a tributary of the Saga Chaung; thence in the same direction to Boundary Pillar No. 1 located on the left bank of the Saga Chaung. Thence in a northeasterly direction for a distance of approximately 2500 yards; thence in a southeasterly direction for approximately 1100 yards; thence in a northeasterly direction for approximately 700 yards; thence in a northerly direction for approximately 1000 yards; thence in a northeasterly direction of approximately 1200 yards to a point on the right bank of a tributary of the Nam A-ya; thence down the midstream of this stream for about one mile; thence in a southeasterly direction for approximately 1000 yards; thence in a northeasterly direction for approximately 700 yards; thence in a an easterly direction for approximately 1000 yards to a point on the right bank of the Tinaing Chaung; thence up the midstream of the Tinaing Chaung to its source; thence across the ridge, where it crosses a track going from Manipur to Burma, thence to the source of the Pangero for Hpinngge Chaung starting from the north face of the ridge, thence down the midstream of this Chaung to its junction with the Khunou Khong; thence down the midstream of this stream to its junction with the Sana Lok and thence along the midstream of the Nam Panga to the point where the main spur of the Kassom range (Lahinpi Taung) meets this river.

From the above point where the main spur of the Kassom range (Lahinpi Taung) meets the Nam Panga, the boundary proceeds along this spur generally in a north-northeasterly

direction till it meets the trigonometrical station Mawlashin Taung; thence generally northwestwards, then northeastwards and then northwards along the watershed between the Sana Lok in the West and the Nam Panga, Nam Tagin, Nam Mawngkhkam and Nam Hka streams in the east, passing through trigonometrical station Thyoliching (Kampal Mol) and peak Hting Hting Bum (Kassom) to trigonometrical station Hkacha Bum; thence in a general northwesterly direction along the same watershed to trigonometrical station Hkayam Bum; thence in a general northwesterly direction along the watershed between the Tuikang stream and the Tizu river in the west and the Nam Hka and the Nam We or Shwezalong Chaung in the east to height 7870; thence in a general north northeasterly direction along the same watershed to a point approximately 1000 yards southeast of height 8256; thence in a general northeasterly direction to peak Mol Len (Kasulum Bum); thence generally southeastwards, then eastwards and then northeastwards along the same watershed to peak Dazipfu (shiloi Mol); then down the midstream of the Petamtsi Ti to its junction with the Ti-Ho or Nantaleik or Tizu river; thence up the midstream of this river for about two miles to its junction with a nameless tributary of the Ti-Ho or Nantaleik or Tizu river flowing from the northeast; thence up the midstream of this nameless tributary to its source near peak Chaku Mol; thence in a northeasterly direction along the watershed between the Ti-Ho or Nantaleik or Tizu river and the Zungki river in the west and the Chilachi Chaung, a tributary of the latnyu He or nantaleik or Sawmalin Chaung the Kundwin He-mu or Mya Chaung, and the Nam Salein or Charing Hka in the east to peak Saramati (Nwemauktaung or Kaiwanya Kyein); thence in a general northerly direction along the same watershed to height 10003; thence in a general northeasterly direction along the same watershed passing through peak Mataungse Kyein to height 11029; thence in a general northwesterly direction along the watershed between the Chokla Lu, the Langnyu river and the tributaries of the Brahmaputra River in the west and the tributaries of the Chindwin River in the east to height 8790; thence in a general northerly direction along the same watershed to height

8650; thence in a general northeasterly direction along the same watershed to height 9840; thence generally northwestwards and then northwards and then northeastwards along the same watershed which is known as Patkai Range, passing through trigonometrical stations 7912 and 5268 to trigonometrical station 8511; thence generally northeastwards, then northwards, then northeastwards and then southeastwards along the same watershed to height 8203; thence in a general northeasterly direction following the watershed between the Brahmaputra and the Chindwin river systems along the Patkai Bum, passing through height 8029 and peak Pungkang to height 7489; thence generally southeastwards along the same watershed to peak Longsip; thence generally northeastwards along the same watershed passing through heights 7578, 7041 and 7340 to peak Ranglung Kan; thence generally eastwards along the same watershed to peak Okhutohap; thence generally northeastwards along the same watershed passing through heights 6257 and 5959 to trigonometrical station Maium (Patkai Bum); thence generally northeastwards, then eastwards and then southeastwards following the watershed between the Brahmaputra and the Chindwin river systems along the Patkai Bum to peak Shawngshan Bum; thence along the watershed between the Irrawaddy and the Brahmaputra river system to its northern extremity, the exact location of which northern extremity will remain provisional pending to its final determination.

Article II

The boundary between the Republic of India and the Union of Burma has been delineated in the maps attached to this Agreement in accordance with the description given in Article I above.

Article III

The Contracting Parties agree to establish a Joint Boundary Commission composed of officials representing the two countries who will be charged with the task of planning and carrying out

demarcation of the boundary between the two countries, with the preparation of boundary maps and with drafting a boundary treaty.

Article IV

The Contracting Parties agree that should any dispute arise concerning the interpretation of the application of this Agreement, it shall be settled by negotiations between them.

Article V

(1) This Agreement is subject to ratification and the instruments of ratification will be exchanged in New Delhi within three months of the signature of the Agreement.

(2) This Agreement will come into force immediately on the exchange of the instruments of ratification and shall automatically cease to be in force when the boundary treaty between the Republic of India and the Union of Burma to be signed by the Contracting Parties comes into force.

DONE in duplicate in Rangoon on the Tenth Day of March Nineteen hundred and sixty-seven in the English language.

Sd/-
KM KANNAM
PILLY
Plenipotentiary of the
Government of the
Republic of India

Sd/-
KYI MAUNG
Government of the
Union of Burma

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“This is the first time I as a Representative of Manipur Crown and Monarchy, unbroken and safeguarded with the blood of my forefathers for about two thousand years, address the First Assembly of the Manipur State on this historic day following the modern practice and British style. I consider myself fortunate to see the birth of an Assembly in the State during my time and again I feel proud to be able to place on record and make it known to the rest of India that though painted otherwise abroad, my state for the first time in India has, just as the sun rises earlier in the east, taken the lead in the direction of democratic government, based on adult franchise and joint electorate in the line of which India is soon following.”

Excerpts from the Proclamation of His Highness Maharaja Bodh Chandra of Manipur on the occasion of First Manipur State Assembly on October 18, 1948

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Born on 15 May, 1959 at Imphal, Manipur (India), the author graduated in BA (Hons) History from University of Delhi in 1979 and hold his Master's degree from the then Jawaharlal Nehru University, Canchipur, Imphal (Under JNU Delhi) in 1981. The author has been active in social activism throughout, since his college days at Delhi University. He had taken many roles as General Secretary of Manipur Students' Association Delhi (MSAD), General Secretary of All Manipur Polo Association (AMPA) and was the founding advisor of Manipur Peace & Integrity (MAPI) Council.

He had, so far, authored four books, namely; *History of the People of Manipur* (Best Book Award, 2004), *Manglan-gi Leikol* (Garden of dreams, Manipuri poetry book), *Kha-gi Leibak Yunan* (Southern Country Yunan, a travelogue on Yunan), *Houkhiba amasung Houjikki Manipur-gi Ngamkhei* (Past & Present Boundaries of Manipur written in Manipuri). He had also written a radio serial for AIR (Imphal) on pre and proto history of Manipur entitled "*Itihas-ki Lamaidagi*" (From the pages of history) and had also presented a number of seminar papers at both state and national levels.

He had served at Manipur Government as a civil servant from 1981 at various capacities as Sub-Deputy Collector, Sub-Divisional Officer, Addl. Director, Under Secretary, Secretary (State Election Commission) Deputy Secretary and etcetera. However, he had taken voluntary retirement from the service in 2011 to begin his career in politics and to further his social works.

Presently, he is active as an Honorary Chairperson of G. Khelchandra Memorial Trust; Life Patron, Indian Red Cross Society (Manipur Chapter); Life Member of Writer's Forum, Manipur and Indo-Myanmar Association, Manipur. He is also an associate member of Mega Manipur Society.

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